

Elizabeth Ireson, MD  
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May 19, 2023

P. Scott Lipps, Chair  
Ohio House Public Health Policy Committee  
Ohio House of Representatives  
77 South High Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chairman Lipps and members of the Public Health Policy Committee,

My name is Elizabeth Ireson, and I am a board-certified, practicing pediatrician. I am currently licensed to provide care for children and adolescents in Ohio. I am a lifetime Ohioan and an eight-year resident of Hamilton County.

The Ohio General Assembly should leave the practice of medicine to licensed healthcare providers. I am gravely concerned that House Bill 68 sets a dangerous precedent by interfering with medical decision making and parent/caregiver autonomy to discuss care options in consultation with their child's medical provider.

I am trained to perform a thorough evaluation on each patient and make treatment recommendations based on the best available evidence for that individual's situation. In my experience, parents/caregivers do the best they can, often in difficult circumstances, to make decisions they believe are in their child's best interest. For example, through shared decision making with their doctors, parents decide to treat their child's cancer with chemotherapy medications that may cause vomiting, weight loss, hair loss, and pain. Many of these medications are part of ongoing clinical trials. These are not easy decisions, but they are decisions that we, as physicians, are trained in having with our patients and their families. Ohio HB68 places medical professionals in an ethical dilemma: we would have to refrain from providing evidence-based care to patients struggling with a diagnosis of gender dysphoria or lose our medical license. **I cannot imagine another diagnosis where a state law would prohibit us from providing our patients with evidence-based care.**

HB68 would ban gender-affirming care for minors. Children and adolescents who identify as transgender face discrimination, bigotry, and hate just for being themselves. With access to gender affirming care, including mental health care, they can grow into happy, productive adults. Family and community support are essential in any child's development. That community includes pediatricians. Children in the LGBTQ+ community need that support more than most. Over half of children who identify as transgender have considered suicide. As a general pediatrician I have cared for many such children when they are admitted to the hospital after suicide attempts associated with gender dysphoria and being forced to hide their true identity. One such patient shared – **"Why is it worth living if the laws say I don't exist?"**


Gender affirming care has been shown to improve health outcomes and reduce the risk of suicide. This carefully designed medical care is comparable to counseling for depression. There is no aspect of experimentation. It is backed by science and continually evaluated to ensure that pediatricians provide

optimal care – as we strive to do in all situations. **Banning gender affirming care will cut off a critical lifeline for struggling youth.**

In a time when the demand for child and adolescent mental health care is at its highest, HB68 makes the demand even higher. The state of Ohio is experiencing a mental health crisis. I address patients' mental health every day. At any given time, there are a dozen or more teenagers waiting in emergency departments and medical hospital units to be admitted for psychiatric care. **I was trained to treat the whole child; ignoring a child's mental health or a diagnosis like gender dysphoria is simply not responsible care.**

I implore you to vote no on HB68. This bill sets a dangerous precedent limiting a parent's right to elect the best treatment for their child. This bill will cause harm to Ohio's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth Ireson MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elizabeth Ireson, MD