

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: 5/23/2023

Name: Marianne Jones Ford

Are you representing: Yourself Organization §

Organization (If Applicable): Marianne Jones Ford LLC

Position/Title: Attorney at Law

Address: 8850 Cottonwood Dr

City: Cincinnati State: OH Zip: 45231

Best Contact Telephone: 513-470-5586 Email: mjf@mariannejonesford.com

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB68

Specific Issue: Trans-affirming Medical Care

Are you testifying as a: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Are you testifying: In-Person ^{or} Written-Only

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? 5 minutes

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

See attached letter

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.

May 23, 2023

Marianne Jones Ford
Parent of Trans child
Attorney at Law
8850 Cottonwood Drive
Cincinnati, Ohio 45231
513-470-5586
mjf@mariannejonesford.com

RE: HB68

Dear Representative Lipps,

I write you today as a parent of a transgender child and a professional child advocate to express my opposition to HB68. This bill endangers the lives of countless children in Ohio, including my own. Professionally, I went to law school for the sole purpose of becoming a Guardian *ad Litem* (GAL) and advocating for the best interests of abused and neglected children. My own traumatic childhood lead me on this path, molding me to speak up for those who could not speak up for themselves.

While my entire extended family was raised in the Catholic Church, and my parents met each other while attending a Catholic High School, my siblings and I were raised outside of church and without any religious education or affiliation. Yet I felt a spiritual guidance at a young age that gave me hope that my adulthood could be different than my childhood. As a teenager that guidance demonstrated itself in my core belief that as an adult three things would be true: 1) I would do good things for kids someday; 2) I would have twins; and 3) my children would have gender issues. By the age of 17, I was able to articulate these beliefs others. All three became accurate.

I gave birth three months early to identical twin boys, Dylan and Ethan. They each weighed less than two pounds. Ethan developed an infection and only lived 26 days. I have already buried one child. I know the pain of saying my final goodbye to my child, and I wish that pain on no one. Dylan thrived and after 9 ½ weeks in the NICU, he came home weighing less than five pounds. By the time Dylan was a toddler, he demonstrated a fondness of everything “girlie.” He was drawn to pink dresses and dolls from the beginning. At three Dylan asked for a baby doll and stroller for Christmas, and of course we obliged.

At the age of 4 ½ Dylan understood something wasn't right about himself. One evening while taking a bath he stated: "Mommy, god many a mistake. Didn't god know I was supposed to be a girl. If I cut my penis off, will I be a girl?" From that point forward my husband and I attempted to support our child as best we could but the Gender Clinic at Cincinnati Children's Hospital had not yet opened, and we could not find any medical support for our child. When our child started Kindergarten, he was still presenting as Dylan. This is the one thing I wish we could go back and do differently. I wish she had been able to start Kindergarten as her true self, as the girl she is, so that her peers would never have been introduced to Dylan.

She was never a boy named Dylan. She was a girl and chose her correct name as a first grader, Lela. This name carries so much meaning. Her Paternal Grandmother was named Lela, unbeknownst to me at the time. In addition, she chose her name just months after a local child, Leelah Alcorn, took her own life due to a lack of family support. I was aware of the worst case scenario for my child, suicide, and I dedicated my efforts to supporting Lela in every way possible. As a trained GAL and education advocate, I possessed the skills to advocate for my child's best interests in all aspects of her life.

Lela began seeing the Gender Clinic staff in the first grade. With this support, she asked to transition socially in the first grade. Her father and I had already allowed her to express herself as Lela in all setting except school. I met with her school to begin planning for her transition at the beginning of second grade. Thankfully, her school was 100% supportive of her transition and brought GLSEN in at the end of the school year to provide staff training to better support her transition in the school setting.

My timeline was not acceptable to Lela. In the last few days of school, at the age of seven, she demonstrated self-advocacy and asked her Principal if she could come to school as Lela on the last day. Her Principal felt she couldn't say no, nor could I. While the staff had not yet received the GLSEN training, Lela has been fully supported from that last day of first grade until now as a rising sophomore

by her school. The few instances of bullying have been reported and properly addressed. Her school has provided her a safe, supportive environment to be herself, and I have forever grateful.

I am also thankful for the support of the Gender Clinic and the medical interventions that keep my child physically and mentally healthy. She has avoided male puberty with puberty blockers, and this was the only choice for her overall health. If my daughter had been forced to endure the effects of male puberty, she would likely not be here today. She began hormone replacement therapy last year to begin the process of feminizing her body. In that time she has blossomed into a child who loves herself so much more than before. She sees herself and her physical body matching her brain which has always identified as a girl. She finally sees herself as beautiful. This brings me joy, but more than anything it brings me hope that she will remain healthy and happy as she moves into adulthood.

Don't take this necessary medical treatment away from my child. HB68 would do just that and would erase the years of progress Lela has made toward finally being herself. I fear for her mental health if she is unable to access these lifesaving interventions. Trans-affirming medical care for children is lifesaving care. No child in Ohio is receiving this medical care unless it has been deemed necessary by their parents and medical care team. Each child endures many medical exams and months of therapy to determine that trans-affirming medical care is necessary.

I ask that you vote against HB68. I ask that you support parents and caregivers and their ability to make the best medical decisions for their children with the support of trained medical professionals. My child's life depends on receiving this care, as do many others in Ohio.

Respectfully,



Marianne Jones Ford
Mother, Attorney, Child Advocate