

Dear Chair Lipps, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Public Health Policy Committee:

My name is Denise McClenathan (she/her), and I OPPOSE HB 68. My husband and I moved to Ohio when I received a job offer from a Fortune 500 company after graduate school. That was almost 20 years ago. Today we live in Cincinnati OH with our two wonderful children, who are 14 and 9. We are fortunate to have a lot of love, laughter, and joy in our lives.

As much as we enjoy the life we have built for ourselves in Ohio, we are preparing to leave our home behind and move to a state that values and supports families like ours. A place where we can obtain evidence-based medical care for our family.

We are proud parents to a transgender child who is thriving today. They have great friends, are doing well in school, and play several instruments. They enjoy spending their free time drawing and creating costumes.

When our child first opened up to us about being transgender, we tried to be supportive. Unfortunately, we stumbled quite a bit. Not knowing other trans individuals, we didn't have the awareness and language we needed. We had a steep learning curve to climb.

At the time, our child was in a dark place. They were extremely self-critical and withdrawn. They were experienced suicide ideation. As our child transitioned socially (new name and pronouns), the darkness started to drift away. Gender-affirming care saved my child.

Our multidisciplinary support team consists of doctors, nurse practitioners, therapists, and social workers, who partner together collaboratively in a thoughtful, considerate, and stepwise manner. My child's treatment addresses menstruation, disordered eating, depression, and anxiety. We have frequent appointments to monitor their physical and mental health, as well as their social and academic well-being. Throughout this journey, I have been extremely impressed with the professionalism and compassion of this team. We are forever grateful to our care team for partnering with us on this journey.

If HB 68 is passed, and if it survives legal challenge, we will leave Ohio. We are lucky enough to have that option for our family. Unfortunately, it is not an option for others. Preventing Medicare from covering the costs of gender affirming care is not only dangerous and unsafe, it is cruel. EVERYONE deserves evidence-based health care.

HB 68 is a dangerous bill that will harm trans youth and their families. Parents and doctors should make healthcare decisions for kids, not legislators. Let us live our lives in peace. Support trans youth and make Ohio a better place for all of our kids. Vote NO on HB 68.