

I am a social worker, researcher, and professor, and am writing to express my opposition to HB 68. I oppose this bill because of its negative effects on already at-risk youth as well as its adverse effects on social workers and the mental health workforce. This bill creates additional barriers for youth to receive mental health care system when they are at increased risk for numerous negative physical and mental health outcomes. Adding more regulations will make it more difficult for providers to accept minors in their practice, making necessary and life-saving care less accessible to youth. I am also concerned about the required reporting to the Ohio Department of Health that is being required as it creates a database of providers and risks the confidentiality of their clients.

In addition to banning vital gender affirming medical interventions, this bill would prohibit social workers from providing evidence based, ethical care to transgender and gender diverse youth. This is in direct opposition to the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics. Further, the behavioral health field is already struggling to maintain an adequate number of staff and adding additional regulations as well as threat of discipline will only lead to further reduction of social workers in the field.

Please vote no on HB 68.

Sincerely,

Rebecca J. McCloskey, PhD, MSW, LISW-S