

Testimony of R. H. Nicholson

Before Ohio House of Representative

House Public Health Policy Committee

Re: HB 68

May 24, 2023

Thank you, Esteemed Committee Members, my name is Ron Nicholson. Thank you for allowing me to testify today about HB 68, the so-called SAFE Act. I am a retired professor of English and the grandfather of nine, the joys of my life. One of my grandchildren died at sixteen months old. Can you imagine our grief? One has a congenital heart condition, one has struggled with severe depression and mental health issues, and one is transgender. To date, all of them have received world-class medical care and I am blessed to say we are a happy, healthy family.

When my six-year-old grandchild was around three years old, we noticed that, although born biologically a boy, she preferred all things feminine. She loved to play with dolls and enact the role of Elsa in the Disney film *Frozen*. She loved wearing Mommy's high heels, the color pink, and having her nails painted. Like so many other families, we waited patiently for this "phase" to run its course. It was not a phase. By the time she was five she refused to be acknowledged as a boy. She insisted her name be changed. She repeatedly said, outright, "I wish I was a girl." It became quite obvious that she saw herself as a girl in every way. She was completely unable to see herself as anything but a girl. When she became aware that this was considered not "normal" a crisis began to build. She said, and I am quoting her, "I am a mistake," and "I wish I was never born." One day she asked my daughter, "Will I go to hell because of who I am?" We were heartbroken that a child so young should have to shoulder such a burden.

Because my daughter and son-in-law are terrific, caring parents, highly educated, successful people who own a beautiful home where they live with their three children, they sought the best treatment possible, which is Cincinnati Children's Hospital and Medical Center. The renowned medical team there diagnosed her with Severe Gender Dysphoria, a universally recognized medical and psychological condition. The diagnosis and resulting therapies have changed her life. She is now a happy, healthy child who loves school, arts and crafts, and playing on the playground. Passage of this law would strip all of that away. It would leave this child to suffer untold harassment, bullying, and discrimination. It would be no different than withholding chemotherapy from a cancer patient or insulin from a diabetic or psychotropic medications from a mentally ill patient. This law would turn my granddaughter and other children like her into societal outcasts, modern day untouchables, vulnerable in so many ways. As you likely know, Transgender children are far more likely to attempt suicide, to self-harm, to suffer from depression and social anxieties.

Some have framed this issue as a religious or moral one. Please allow me to address that. I am a man of deep faith. I have read the Bible, every word of it, and studied it. One overarching theme of Christ's life and the preaching of other major religious deities, is love and compassion. Jesus didn't just tolerate the forgotten, the crippled, the blind, the deaf, tax collectors, and harlots, he embraced them, celebrated them, often preferred them. Over and over the Bible refers to Jesus' command that we should love ALL people. So, those who would use the Bible or their faith as a weapon in this discussion are, in fact, the most unchristian of people.

What's more, these children present no danger to anyone, no potential harm to society. Living their lives hurts no one. No child's school education will be negatively impacted by these children. Their affirming care does not cost taxpayers. It creates no inequities, no disparities, no threat. None.

So, as the members of this honorable committee can plainly see, there is absolutely no medical reason to pass this law. All recognized medical organizations, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychological Association, the Centers for Disease Control, and the Surgeon General of the United States find it would be horribly wrong. There is no religious or moral justification for it, for it is wholly unchristian and ungodly. There is no educational value to be gained from it and both major teacher's associations stand against this bill. There would be no public danger caused by its defeat. Simply put, no caring, moral person can find any legitimate reason to support HB 68. I have every faith in this committee that you will take just action and stand up for my granddaughter and all of the children like her. God bless you.

On Behalf of my granddaughter, age 6
Waynesville, Ohio 45068