

I urge you to vote **NO** on House Bill 68 and protect critical healthcare for transgender and non-binary youth.

Ohioans deserve access to safe, fact-based healthcare, as well as the right to keep their individual medical needs between them and their providers. House Bill 68 not only threatens the privacy of transgender and non-binary youth, but also their ability to seek gender-affirming care. This harmful legislation infiltrates a family's right to make important medical decisions that should only involve their medical providers – not the government.

As a Social Worker in Ohio, my ability to practice safely and ethically is also at risk.

- The behavioral health field is already struggling to maintain an adequate number of staff and adding additional rules/regulations as well as threat of discipline will only lead to even more of a decrease in social workers in the field.
- 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.**
- Regulations are already in place for minors receiving behavioral health care; Ohio Revised Code states that youth 14 and older cannot receive services past 30 days or 6 sessions without parental consent and for youth under 14, services cannot be provided at all without parental consent. Parents can also request treatment records at any time. Adding more regulations only for trans youth is both unnecessary and is discriminatory.
- Behavioral health providers would be banned from providing gender-affirming care to minors without first obtaining explicit parental consent to do so and without first screening for “other comorbidities that may be influencing the individual's gender-related conditions”
- BH professionals are already required to obtain parental consent for treatment, and this bill would specifically discriminate against trans youth, placing more barriers to care in their way
- It would also lead to providers being possibly required to “out” youth to their caregivers before they may be ready or safe to do so
- Requiring providers to rule out any other mental health conditions prior to treating a gender condition places unnecessary barriers to care
- Every behavioral health provider who diagnoses a minor with gender dysphoria or otherwise provides gender-affirming care (counseling, resource referrals, support for social transition – pronoun/name changes, coming out to loved ones, changing hairstyles/clothing choices) would be required to report the number of minors being treated – and additional data – to the Ohio Department of Health
- This creates a database of gender-affirming care providers/facilities, making it easy to target them and potentially place their clients at risk
- Continuing to provide gender-affirming care can lead to disciplinary action by the social work board, up to and including a loss of licensure

Individuals, regardless of their age or gender, should have the right to show up as their full, authentic selves, especially in the presence of their healthcare providers. HB 68 would severely damage the well-being of LGBTQ+ youth, while also jeopardizing the trust between providers and patients. It could lead to providers being possibly required to “out” youth to their caregivers before they may be ready or safe to do so. The risk of suicide in LGBTQ+ youth is dangerously high already this adds another risk factor for these youth.

I urge you to vote **NO** on HB 68 to protect the mental and physical health of youth in the LGBTQ+ community.

Sincerely,

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Crisis Counselor/Social Worker