

Testimony of Garrison Bowling, Executive Director of the Ohio Student Activist Alliance

Before the Public Health Policy Committee

Representative Scott Lipps, Chair

June 14th, 2023

Members of the Public Health Policy Committee, thank you for letting me testify today. In the past month, we have watched as the sponsor of this bill assured the people of Ohio that this legislation was designed to help young people, to protect them, and to ensure their safety. That is a lie. This legislation is designed to target transgender youth, to take away their gender affirming care, and to forcefully de-transition transgender youth.

According to a research study conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health, gender affirming care is associated with lower rates of psychological distress and suicidal ideation. This study was based on a survey of over 20,000 transgender participants. The study showed that people who went through gender transition surgery displayed a 44% reduction in suicidal ideation.

This research paints a clear picture – gender affirming care is life affirming care. If the state of Ohio passes HB68, it will lead to an increase in the rate of youth suicides. I believe that’s exactly why some members of the general assembly want to support this legislation. Some people might argue that it’s not the fault of the government if the rate of suicide increases, but I would ask those people to consider – how would you feel if the government was trying to outlaw your existence?

Before you vote on this legislation, ask yourself if you want to be on the right side of history. Do you want to be remembered for protecting the rights of others? Or do you want to be remembered for attacking an already marginalized community? I would implore every member of the house and senate - Do the right thing. Vote against this harmful, unnecessary and imprudent piece of legislation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Garrison B". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underneath the name.

Garrison Bowling