

Opponent Testimony for H.B. 68

Public Health Policy Committee

June 12, 2023

James L. DeFeo

Chair P. Scott Lipps, Ranking Member Beth Liston, and members of the Public Health Policy Committee, I write to express my opposition to House Bill 68 and to ask you to vote against this dangerous roll-back of parental rights. I hesitate to write at all, because a few representatives appear to be having a rollicking good time discussing the intimate medical issues of people they don't care a lick about and are sponsoring the bill for the sole purpose of "trolling" people like me (here's pointing to you Representatives Stewart and Click). I trust that that group is small and the remaining members are truly concerned about an issue that they are just learning about and are open to learning from those of us who have actual experience with this matter. I therefore address this to those individuals that have an actual curiosity and take this matter seriously. For those of you who are clearly trolling for political points, just add me to your tally of concerned parents "trolled" by your bill and please stop reading. I'd rather the details of my family's experience with this matter not populate whatever polluted dreams that are prompting you to attack vulnerable individuals who simply want decisions about their medical care to be made by those in the best position to make those decision: themselves, their parents, and their medical professionals.

For the rest of you, this is a very important issue to me because I fear that had a law such as that proposed by HB 68 been enacted ten years earlier, my son would no longer be with us. When my son was in high school, he came out as transgender, first at school, then at home. No one convinced my son to be transgender. No one made him queer. The entire process of coming to terms with who he is and conflicting pressures and ideas led him to have suicidal thoughts, at least one failed attempt, and multiple hospitalizations. It was only after he found support at school and through counseling that he was able to build the courage to come out to his parents at home. Had the school not been a supportive environment, where he could speak freely with his peers and school staff and participate in the local GSA chapter, and had he not been able to speak with his counselor without her getting our prior permission, I fear that we may have lost him. And this is no idle fear because he knew several people who faced real threats of violence at home and was unsure how we, his parents, would react. But because the school and his counselor were able to allow an open communication about these issues, he was able to adjust, come out to us, and actually support other students who struggle with similar issues. He is now on gender-affirming hormone treatment that has helped give him a new lease on life.

Many others are not so fortunate. They lack a supportive environment and the skills to adapt to the reality of their sexuality and/or gender identification, over which they have no control. Like it or not, the world and our schools are filled with students who do not fit the traditional cis-hetero notions of gender and sexuality. And every one of us, regardless of our own sexual and gender identities, our social status, our religious beliefs, or our family background, either has family, knows someone, or will know someone who struggles with the same issues, whether we know it or not. The misguided bill would not change these basic facts, which have always been a basic

part of American society. This bill would effectively abandon these vulnerable individuals. It presents nothing more than a misguided attempt to erase these individuals from public view.

The medical and mental health professionals have adequately debunked the pseudo-science that litters section 2 of the bill, which is as offensive as it is inaccurate, so I will leave that to them. But I will ask you again to let parents, assisted by medical professionals, determine what is in the best interests of their children. In short, vote no on this horrendous bill and keep your hands off our children.

I am happy to answer any questions.

Jim DeFeo