

**Opponent of Testimony for HB68  
OHR Public Health Policy Committee  
June 12, 2023**

**Bree, Public Safety Fellow / Trans Activist & Program Facilitator  
Policy Matters Ohio / LGBT Center of Greater Cleveland**

Chair Lipps, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Public Health Policy Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Bree and my pronouns are they/them. I am a Black trans masc/queer disabled veteran, community organizer, Ohio resident and proud Clevelander. I am writing to express my absolute opposition and overall concern for HB 68 in its entirety. Simply put, this bill is violent and harmful to LGBTQIA+ youth, and will have irreparable consequences if enacted. This is especially true for trans and gender diverse children and for those who have intersecting identities that are systematically marginalized.

Gender affirming care is without a doubt live-saving care. This makes access to comprehensive and supportive care critical for the livelihoods of so many kids who seek treatment. Studies show that restricting and revoking to gender-affirming resources jeopardizes the mental health and well being of trans and gender diverse kids. This is a direct pipeline to self-harm and/or worse, SUICIDE. LGBT+ youth are subject to extremely higher rates of suicide, not because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, but rather because of how they are mistreated, stigmatized and SYSTEMICALLY marginalized through policies like HB68.

As a veteran who once put my mind, body, and soul on the line for a country that allows for states like Ohio to introduce bills like HB68, it is disheartening and sickening to witness. I was once that child you all are targeting with this bill. As a teen, I witnessed loved ones' sexual orientations and gender identities being disclosed without consent. The harm I watched this type of violation and policing cause made it almost impossible to recover from for many of my friends directly impacted.

In my community, the lack of access to basic healthcare has always directly correlated to the mental wellbeing of so many folks that look like me. When intersections of race and gender overlap, the disparities faced among these underserved communities specifically, are overwhelming and oftentimes deadly. Cleveland is a majority Black city whose public school population has 1 in every 5 kids that identify as LGBTQIA+. Cleveland has also declared racism as a public health crisis.

HB68 directly and systemically attacks the community that I am so dearly a part of. Not only that, HB68 attacks the FUTURE of my community; the YOUTH represent the right now AND the tomorrow. HB68 is unequivocally gender and race-based state sanctioned violence against

LGBTQIA+ youth, and for the kiddos that stand at the intersection of said identities, the negative impact on their lives are life threatening.

I urge you to consider my testimony to vote **NO** or better yet, **remove this entire bill from the floor immediately.**

Thank you. I'm happy to answer any questions.

Bree Easterling (they/them)