

Public Health Policy Committee
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, Ohio 43215
OHRPublicHealthPolicyCommittee@ohiohouse.gov

June 14, 2023

RE: HB 68 "SAFE" act or the trans youth medical ban - *oppositional testimony*

Dear Hon. Chair Lipps, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston, and respected Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to address you on this important issue. My name is James. I have been involved in the care of the greater trans community for the entirety of my adult life and have personally fielded more crisis calls from crying trans youth and panicked mothers than I care to count. That number has been increasing since 2015, a year that major news networks dubbed "the deadliest year on record for transgender people." 2015 has nothing on 2023. With increased violence, political rhetoric, and bills like HB68, the general morale within the community is very low – but that's the point, isn't it?

In Ohio alone, just since January 2023, we have lost 4 trans youth under 17 to self-harm. Gender-affirming care saves lives. It isn't just a hashtag; it's an observable phenomenon. Gender-affirming care for gender variant people has been practiced in the United States since before 1931. Physicians in Ohio have been practicing gender-affirming care in the 1950s! And Ohio now has some of the best gender-affirming care in the nation. To outlaw that care isn't just an absurd restriction on individual liberties, an assault on parental rights, and a violation of doctor-patient relationship, it will also put hundreds of youth trans people at direct risk of harm.

Gender Affirming Care is a collaborative effort with trans individuals through a number of interventions (social, legal, medical, behavioral, surgical) designed to holistically address their well-being through peer involved processes to:

- improve social, psychological, behavioral, and medical health,
- provide respectful support and affirmation of their self-attested gender identity,
- ensure inclusion and use of trauma-informed and harm reduction principles, and
- provide a welcoming, inviting health care setting, regardless of size of practice, in conjunction with their doctors and their personal support system.

Cisgender (not trans) people receive gender-affirming care every time they visit a doctor - they receive care that takes their gender into consideration without attempting to undermine or change it. Puberty blockers were approved by the FDA in 1993 and have been prescribed to cisgender children for even longer. They are safe. They are effective. And the physical side effects are temporary and wholly reversible. Please, please, listen to doctors who treat trans youth. Review WPATH Standards of Care and guidelines. Read the statements put out by the medical associations, pediatricians, and social workers. You are DENYING MEDICAL CARE based on bias.

All Ohio youth deserve access to medical care. This proposed legislation isn't just dangerously discriminatory; it's illegal. I urge you to **vote no**.

Respectfully submitted,
James Knapp