

Opponent Testimony on HB 68
Ariel Miller, June 14, 2023

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston, and Members of the Public Health Committee,

I am a Christian voter in Cincinnati who has spent my career working as a reporter and human services advocate for the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio. Episcopal Christian's vocation, which we affirm several times a year in recommitting to our Baptismal vows, includes:

- To seek and serve Christ in all people, loving our neighbors as ourselves
- To strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

Book of Common Prayer, p. 305

HB 68 violates God's commandment to love our neighbors, and intensifies the headwinds of contempt, bullying and scapegoating which put LGBTQ+ youth at such high risk of suicide. This bill goes against the core of Christian love.

In addition to prohibiting gender-identity affirming health and mental health care for transgender youth in Ohio, this bill will deny the rights of parents to provide them with the care they need to feel safe and at home in their bodies and spirit.

I have met and worked happily with many transgender people in my decades as a Sunday school teacher, parish youth group leader, and human rights advocate. A transgender man served as youth director in our parish. He is an outstanding father. He grew up in a Christian home and began his transition as a young person. He walks the talk of Christian faith. He and his wife – both social workers - have just adopted their fifth child after serving as foster parents for the baby for over a year. Two of their children have serious disabilities and they are all growing up in a loving, firm, and supportive home.

I am so concerned about HB 68 that I visited the hearing record to see who supports and who opposed it, and on what basis. I counted opponent and proponent testimony, discovering that before this latest hearing, 237 people, including spokespeople from Ohio's major children's hospitals and other health and mental health providers, have already submitted opponent testimony. Only 19 proponents testified, including the sponsor, Rep. Click.

Trans children are no danger to you. The sponsors and supporters of this bill appear to be using them as scapegoats. Legislation like this increases the risk of hate crimes. If you pass this bill, you will be putting the lives of LGBTQ+ children and youth in greater danger. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. I can't attend the hearing but will be praying for you and for Ohio's transgender youth and their families while you are meeting.

Sincerely,
Ariel Miller, Cincinnati, Ohio

