

Dear Chair Lipps and Committee members,

I am a resident of Franklin county, Ohio, and I oppose legislation restricting medical care for transgender youth because study after study has shown this medical care saves lives. I am a veterinary scientist and also a transgender person. I was hesitant to move to Ohio approximately 10 years ago because I was concerned about the more conservative climate and the lack of legal protections and care for people like me. With bills like HB68, I suspect it is only a matter of time before the care I currently need is challenged. I am involved in life-saving research here in Ohio, and am passionate about what I do. However, I cannot put myself and my family at risk by continuing to live in this state.

When people receive treatment for gender dysphoria, research has shown that symptoms of anxiety and depression are greatly reduced. From my own experience, I completely stopped feeling suicidal after I received gender affirming care, and I know many others feel the same. Teenagers are especially at risk for suicide and self harm, and it's important to help reduce that risk as much as possible by providing them health care in all ways--including gender affirming care. Also, teenagers are resourceful, and if gender-related care is banned they will try to find ways to alleviate their dysphoria anyway. When I was a teenager and young adult, before gender-affirming care was widely available to anyone, I witnessed many friends attempt to take gender care into their own hands by binding their chests with medical bandages. This put them at risk for long term damage of their lungs, ribs, and chest muscles. If they had had access to gender-affirming care and the opportunity to prevent breast development, they never would have needed to risk harming themselves in this way. Safe, legal gender care provided by a physician is one of the best ways to protect transgender youth.

As I said, when I started receiving medical care for my gender dysphoria, I no longer felt suicidal. My anxiety and depression drastically lessened. I felt like I had been given another chance at life. I have seen so many of my loved ones become happier, healthier people when they finally gain access to gender-affirming care. And I absolutely cannot stay in a state where legislators are actively attempting to harm me, my loved ones, and transgender youth. It would be devastating to see transgender youth denied access to safe, proven, and effective treatments for gender dysphoria. It would also be very harmful to me, personally, if similar bills targeting transgender adults were to be passed and I was subsequently denied gender-affirming care. Thus, because of HB68 and bills like it I am actively seeking work outside this state and plan to move as soon as possible. I cannot live in a state that wants to withhold life-saving medical care from transgender people.

Transgender youth are uniquely vulnerable, and bills such as HB68 only make life harder for them. As lawmakers you should be working to enact anti-discrimination laws to protect transgender people, not legislatively harassing us. We are your constituents, your neighbors, and your co-workers. We deserve access to life-saving medical care at all stages of life, just like everyone else.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. Please vote no on HB68.

Sean