

I am writing to express my opposition to HB68. My name is Paola and I'm an independent voter living in Chagrin Falls, Ohio (currently registered Republican but have also registered as a Democrat). I can tell you with utmost certainty that the government's drive to relieve parents of their rights will damage families and children. My friend gave birth to three daughters. From the earliest age, her middle child gravitated towards boyish activities and hairstyles. By the time the child was five or six, she was often mistaken for a boy and inhabited a boy's personality and interests. I think we all hoped that she would outgrow this phase and fit more comfortably into a predictable growth progression. I know for a fact that her mom desperately wanted this at the time. All of this is to say, that if the parents and the community of this child saw any alternative to her trajectory, they would have embraced it. However, I have seen with my own eyes that this child simply was not meant to be a girl. She never called attention to herself, nor did she struggle with her identity, but rather quietly went through life living as a boy from her earliest moments. I have heard talk about delaying the use of medications until a child is 18, but in cases such as this, that would absolutely damage the child and his/her ability to live as a male as an adult. Additionally, it would cause terrible suffering during the adolescence period. My understanding is that depression and even suicide can result during this time. I also understand that there are cases in which delaying decision-making might be the best course. But there are instances where this is absolutely not the case. The parents, the doctor, and the child are best positioned to collectively make this decision – not the government. When I was a young girl, I read the book 1984, and it terrified me. It described a government with ultimate control over its people, taking away fundamental rights and decision making. HB69 reminds me of this book, and I'm shocked that the party that has always stood for minimal government interventions is spearheading this effort. In my opinion we need real unbiased research into this issue to help the medical community and parents understand when these choices should be postponed and when they should not. Is this not a medical decision that should be guided by medical research? My understanding is that in other countries that have been addressing this issue for longer there are criteria involving mental health and onset of gender identity that can guide the medical community (and parents) on this decision. Why can we not emulate this approach here – based in research about successful outcomes and unsuccessful outcomes? Why must we artificially insert ourselves into parental/medical decisions? It is wrong and it cruel, and as more people see how this affects our most vulnerable loved ones, it will be a terrible political decision as well.