

**Opponent Testimony for House Bill 68
Government Oversight Committee
Wednesday, December 6, 2023**

Mr Cody Clark

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Government Oversight Committee,

My name is Cody and I am a 20 year old dancer and student. I am trans and disabled, and I use he/him or they/them pronouns. I am here to testify against the SAFE act. I find it ironic that this act is titled “the SAFE act” because of how many young lives it has the potential to take. People with dreams, desires, friendships, and communities who just need some support and affirmations from the world around them. Young people who may very well kill themselves without access to gender affirming care. I was one of those young people once. The reason I am here, the reason I am alive, is because I got top surgery at sixteen. Gender affirming care is much more than surgery, it is beautiful and expansive and life saving. And for me, after wanting it since I was eleven, it meant surgery. It’s the reason I am talking to you today. If this bill gets passed, I have no doubt that it will displace and kill Ohioans.

If I may talk about a specific part of this bill that is particularly harmful to me and my community: page 6, lines 134-144. “No mental health professional shall diagnose or treat a minor individual who presents for the diagnosis or treatment of a gender-related condition without screening the minor individual for both of the following during the course of diagnosis and treatment: (1) Other comorbidities that may be influencing the minor individual's gender-related condition, including depression, anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder, and other mental health conditions; (2) Physical, sexual, mental, and emotional abuse and other traumas.” First of all, this is a slap in the face to trans autistics like myself, who are infinitely deserving of both mental and gender affirming care. Second, the reason I had depression, anxiety, and trauma was due to the hate crimes that I experienced because of existing as trans in my supposedly good and accepting catholic high school. All in the name of god.

I love being trans. My partners are trans, my best friends are trans, my sibling is trans. I would choose being trans in every single lifetime, in every single universe. The trans community is the greatest joy of my life. Trans love and trans joy is sacred. My shirt was made by a Black trans artist from New York City, who goes by softxprints on instagram. If you can't read it, it says "you are lucky to be loved by a trans person." I feel that love every day, and I almost feel bad for the people pushing this bill, and that every single day they wake up and choose violence, they alienate themselves from that love from their family, community, and constituents. Trans people are proof of a love that has lasted for generations, a love that most people can't even imagine.

I want to leave you all with a quote from Daniel M. Lavery. "God blessed me by making me transsexual for the same reason God made wheat but not bread and fruit but not wine, so that humanity might share in the act of creation." Those pushing this bill are working to destroy a beautiful and resilient community, but it will. not. work. May we sprout like unexpected spring flowers, emerge into being like stars, may we burst into the morning like the familiar dawn. Trans people are inevitable, and that is a blessing. May our existence expose the areas of our law, our culture, our communities that can be grown and reborn into a liberated world. Because we are not going anywhere.

Thank you for letting me speak. I'm happy to answer any questions.