

To Chair Roegner & Ranking Member Hicks Hudson
Re: Enact Ohio Saving Adolescents from Experimentation (SAFE) Act Ohio House Bill 68

In Opposition

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify. My name is Adam Clevenger; I use he/him and they/them pronouns. I am a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor and Supervisor in the State of Ohio. I am also a Certified Sex Therapist by the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists. I am the owner and Executive Director of Tandem Columbus, a group therapy practice in Columbus, Ohio that specializes in sex, gender, and trauma therapy. We frequently provide support and care to gender diverse people who exist across the gender and sexuality spectrums. I am also a parent, raising my infant son with my husband in Minerva Park (Columbus), Ohio. As a mental health counselor and a parent, I am writing in strong opposition to HB 68 banning gender affirming healthcare for minors.

As a mental health provider, I have more than 10 years of experience providing mental health support and treatment to people with diverse gender orientations who identify as transgender, non-binary, AND gender queer. Relying on the Standards of Care published by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), I have provided the necessary clinical interview and assessment to help clients access hormone therapy and other gender affirming medical treatments throughout my career. I have worked with gender diverse minors and adults across the lifespan, and have provided support for their parents, children, siblings, partners, clergy, friends, roommates, teachers, and coworkers. The experiences of people who are transgender reflect the natural human variance in sex and gender that has always existed throughout time and place. Our individual freedom to live, work, vote, and worship would be in question without the historical engagement of countless transgender people who have led and motivated important civil rights movements throughout the globe. Transgender minors and adults have always existed and will continue to exist with or without HB 68. This is not a political issue. This is a humanitarian issue. Our care, support, validation, and inclusion of transgender individuals reflects our moral commitment to equality and human progress.

As a mental health professional, I understand that a sudden disruption in gender affirming healthcare, or barriers to receiving gender affirming healthcare (supported by all major medical organizations like the American Academy of Pediatrics), could precipitate physical and mental health crises among trans youth that will have lasting consequences in adulthood. The medical interventions outlined in HB 68 are often lifesaving interventions. During my time as a mental health counselor, I have directly observed the ways these interventions positively impact the mental health of my clients. Additionally, I have witnessed the vulnerability, compassion, and care of parents who are trusting medical and mental health professionals to provide accurate information and gender affirming treatment to ensure their children continue to thrive, and become thriving adults.

The proposed law, if enacted, will cause irreparable harm to individuals and their families, and will have consequences later in life as these adolescents' become adults. As a mental health provider, I am providing this testimony knowing that my clients' mental health and wellbeing is dependent on access to well-supported medical interventions like those in question today. As a parent, I am writing in support of parental rights to consult and rely on the advice of medical experts. I stand in solidarity with the parents, caregivers, and treatment providers for trans and gender diverse youth in protest of HB 68.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote no on this harmful bill.

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