

**Testimony of Rick Colby  
Father of a Transgender Son  
to the  
Senate Government Oversight Committee Dec. 6, 2023**

Chairwoman Roegner, members of the committee, my name is Rick Colby. I live in Columbus and I'm the father of a transgender son, Ashton Colby. Ashton and I oppose House Bill 68, sponsored by Rep. Gary Click.

I'm a Republican, a Christian and as anti-woke as you can get. My son is also a Christian.

I love my son dearly, just as I know many of you with children do yours. I have watched my son transform over the past eleven years into the son and man any father would be proud to have. I watch the "debate" about transgender people and attempts to ban gender-affirming care and I'm appalled. Never in my wildest imagination, when my son told me he was transgender 11 years ago, did I think that one day the Republican party, the party I belong to, would be attempting to pass laws to ban and criminalize a transgender person's access to care in Ohio. My main concern back then was keeping him alive and figuring out how to get the best care and help him thrive. He had been suicidal in college because he simply did not see a path forward as a woman.

The people wanting to ban gender-affirming care have no idea what it is like to be transgender or to have a transgender child. I believe there are objective truths in this world. And one objective truth I learned, as a parent, is that being transgender is a real thing. In my view, if something is an objective truth, then it transcends any political ideology. If you understand that being transgender is a real thing, then that creates pathways for discussion about how to help transgender people get the best care and become productive members of Ohio's workforce. If you don't think being transgender is a real thing, then it creates a skewed and flawed decision tree that, at best, results in a lack of empathy and understanding; at worse, it can result in harmful public policies, like this bill.

Being transgender is not something that is done on a whim. It is a deep-rooted dysphoria that, yes, even has spiritual elements to it. My son has a masculine soul and he said he has felt this way since he was five. He tried so hard to overcompensate and to try to fit into being a feminine young woman participating in beauty pageants. For years he tried to be a young woman. That didn't ease the ache and sadness in his soul and it was only until he was able to transition to be a young man did the light in his eyes turn back on.

You've got to go easy on this. This is a terrible bill. On the basis of a false narrative – that there all these left-wing parents pushing their child to be transgender – you are about to destroy parents' rights in a massive government overreach. You've got to let Ohio parents continue to figure this out with their child, their physician, counselor, children's hospital, etc.

Ashton's journey is heroic. If you had seen the way he has fought to become the man he has always wanted to be, and the things he has endured to get there, you would have a better understanding about what it means to be transgender.

Completely banning all medical interventions for any person under 18 with gender dysphoria is a horrific idea. It will most likely result in suicides, depression, substance abuse and homelessness.

When Ashton started his transition eleven years ago, there weren't children's hospitals with clinics focused on transgender care. We had so many challenges trying to find good care for him. Young people are having better care now. This is a wonderful thing. My son, and others like him, were pioneers.

My son has spoken publicly about his gender transition to thousands of people each year. I met a friend of his, another trans man, who started on testosterone at age 16 and who is now in his mid-twenties and thriving. Because he started before age 19, which is when growth plates stop, he has had an excellent transition, including several added inches of height. Under this bill, with a ban until age 18, a person like Ashton's friend would not be able to go on testosterone. A physician who prescribed it would be a criminal and violating state law.

Please do not create roadblocks to transgender people becoming who they are meant to be and becoming productive members of society. Ohio is making great strides in attracting tech companies like Intel to Ohio, which has internal policies to support transgender employees, as well as parents who have transgender children. A parent who has a trans child who works for Intel would find that, were this bill to pass, they would be unable to access gender-affirming care for their child if they were to be transferred to Ohio. If you were to survey Ohio companies, you'd find many who support their transgender employees.

Please vote against this terrible bill. I'd be happy to answer any questions.