

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Senate Government Oversight Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to House Bill 68.

My name is Alex DiDonato. I hold a Bachelor of Science in Public Health in Community Health Outreach and Development, and I am currently pursuing a Master of Public Health in Health Policy and Management. I am also a highly concerned constituent of Chair Roegner's district, District 27.

I have spent nearly the last two years of my early professional career conducting community health needs assessments in collaboration with the LGBTQ+ communities in Greater Akron and Greater Cleveland. I could cite myriad evidence-based, scientific facts and statistics about how this type of legislation will only serve to cause incalculable harm to Ohio citizens seeking gender-affirming healthcare. But, if evidence-based, scientific facts and statistics were all it took to change minds, this bill would not exist, and I would not need to write this testimony today.

First, I would like to say that gender-affirming healthcare is not experimentation. I cannot begin to express how dehumanizing and offensive it is to call life-saving healthcare services experimentation. I am sure that those before me have made this clear, but every reputable medical association—from the American Medical Association to the American Academy of Pediatrics to the American Psychological Association—affirms that gender-affirming healthcare is essential, life-saving care that reduces the risk of suicidal ideation and other adverse health outcomes.

House Bill 68 is a very real and active threat to not only transgender individuals and their rights in this state but also to healthcare and mental health providers attempting to perform and uphold their sworn, ethical oath and duty to provide care for all individuals. I should not have to remind nor debate with public servants that you swore your own oaths to uphold the Constitutions of the United States and Ohio to protect the rights of all Ohioans. All being the operative word.

I would also like to comment that as a child of divorce, it terrifies me to think that the court system would be prohibited from considering a parent's refusal to accept a child's trans identity in custody cases. Everyone deserves dignity, respect, and safety, especially our young people who are just learning who they are and where they fit in the world.

This bill is not saving adolescents. This bill is intentionally and methodically cruel, hostile, and injurious to Ohio youth. There is nothing more insidious than introducing legislation that seeks to restrict the rights of any individual, particularly the rights of those who are too young to vote, and especially legislation that attempts to restrict healthcare access and one's right to choose.

I implore you to vote no on House Bill 68 and urge you to support policies that uphold the rights and dignity of transgender individuals, ensure their access to necessary healthcare, and allow them to participate in sports consistent with their gender identity.

Thank you for your consideration,

Alex DiDonato, BSPH