

Transgender healthcare is healthcare.

It is not a trendy fad.

It is not an elective nicety.

It is life-saving healthcare.

Last week we celebrated Transgender Day of Remembrance. We read the names and saw the pictures of hundreds of primarily young, black, transgender women who died from violence or suicide simply because of who they are—people beautifully and wonderfully made in the image of God.

Those sacred lives ended brutally and before they could live into all of who they are.

At these remembrance services, we vowed to work to make the number of deaths lower next year. To protect those who are vulnerable. To save lives.

Offering medically established healthcare saves lives.

House Bill 68 will take lives.

House Bill 68 will remove the option from medical professionals to provide evidence-based gender-affirming care, despite clinical diagnosis, parental consent, or individual impact. This includes physician services, inpatient and outpatient hospital services, or prescription drug hormones.

The title of House Bill 68 is “Enact Ohio Saving Adolescents from Experimentation (SAFE) Act”. However, there is nothing experimental about this established, basic medical care. These practices have been endorsed by close to 30 medical associations. Earlier this year, the American Medical Association passed a resolution to protect the very care that House Bill 68 would prohibit “it is the responsibility of the medical community to speak out in support of evidence-based care. Medical decisions should be made by patients, their relatives, and health care providers, not politicians.” This resolution was co-sponsored by The American Academy of Pediatrics, The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, The American Urological Association, The American Society for Reproductive Medicine, The American College of Physicians, The American Association of Clinical Endocrinology, GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ+ Equality, and the AMA’s Medical Student Section

The acronym SAFE, used in the title of House Bill 68, is untrue. There is nothing safe about this bill. In fact, LGBTQ+ youth are four times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers. Higher rates of suicide and depression are not a result of a person’s gender or orientation, but because of how they are treated by the world around them. Passing House Bill 68 would be another act of violence harming transgender youth.

We can save lives by defeating this bill. A study published by the Journal of the American Medical Association in 2002 noted that access to gender-affirming care reduces rates of depression and suicidality. Access to healthcare “was associated with 60% lower odds of moderate or severe depression and 73% lower odds of suicidality over a 12-month follow-up.”

It is time for all of us to stand together for the sacred value of some of the most vulnerable lives today—transgender youth. We can save lives. We can send a message that our children are loved, seen, and that their lives are important.

Save a life. Ensure access to healthcare. Defeat House Bill 68.