

The Ohio Senate
135th General Assembly
House Bill 68
Opponent Testimony – December 6, 2023
Julie Lawson

Members of the Ohio Senate Government Oversight Committee,

In 2008, after a healthy pregnancy and a full-term typical birth I spent the standard two days in the hospital. I couldn't wait to go home and see my 2 ½-year-old and start our life as a family of four. But then my baby started to have blood in his stool. Then more blood in his diaper. Then he stopped breathing. He stopped breathing several times. Medical professionals were in that room. My husband and I were in that room. You weren't in that room. The doctors and nurses saved his life. You didn't save his life. Every second that we spent waiting to see if he would stop breathing again, you were not in that room. Our trust was placed in the doctors and nurses caring for him. They made critical life or death decisions that determined my baby's fate. Not you.

My son was rushed by ambulance to Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital in Cleveland. He turned a corner while in their neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), but my husband and I were faced with more critical decisions every day. Before each time his tiny arms were punctured by needles intruding into his veins with medicine that we *hoped* would help, the medical team informed my husband and I the benefits and risks of each procedure. Then every decision was placed squarely on the shoulders of my husband and me. You were not there informing us of the benefits and risks. You were not making those decisions.

So what makes you think that you should step in and make medical decisions for my child now? I carried my child for 9 months and have raised him for 15 ½ years. My husband and I, lifelong residents of Ohio, have made decisions at every stage of development that impact our child and his health. We don't want or need the government taking away our parental rights and making medical decisions for our child.

Every single medical decision in my child's life has been placed before my husband and I by a team of educated, board certified medical professionals who are following best practices endorsed by countless medical associations. The gender affirming care that my son is receiving followed the same process: educated, board certified medical professionals have followed the best practices endorsed by countless medical associations. They have presented to us the benefits and risks of treatment, and lack of treatment. My husband and I have taken it a step further and learned all that we can about gender dysphoria and the transgender community beyond our numerous appointments with general practitioners, psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists, pediatric endocrinologists, fertility specialists, and clinical ethicists. Then the ultimate decision came down to my husband and me.

But you think that politicians know better than educated, board certified medical professionals, medical professions who endorse standards of care, and parents raising their children.

Since my son started receiving hormone replacement therapy for his gender dysphoria in March this year, my husband and I have seen a drastic improvement in his overall physical and mental health. Our child's smile is back, his hope is restored, and his future is bright.

If you pass this bill, it will destroy my child. It may kill him. I don't use those words lightly. You are making life and death decisions for people you have never met. You are contradicting the education, expertise, and professionalism of the entire medical community that you would trust in a heartbeat on any other medical issue.

Denying medical care for any condition is simply inhumane. You were not elected to play God and take parental rights away from your constituents. This bill was written out of hate toward transgender people. And if passed, it will be due to fear of transgender people. This bill does NOT "save" our children, it harms them. It may kill them.

Passing this bill could kill my son.

Kill this bill instead. Do not move it forward. If it goes for a vote. Please vote no. That is how you can save my child.