

Opponent Testimony, House Bill 68  
Kevin K. Makino, MD, PhD  
Senate Government Oversight Committee  
December 6, 2023

Chair Roegner, Vice-Chair Antani, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to House Bill 68. My name is Kevin Makino; I am a practicing child/adolescent psychiatrist, board certified pediatrician, health services researcher, and father, and provide this testimony on behalf of the nearly 200 physicians, psychologists, licensed counselors, and advanced practice providers whose signatures appear below, and who provide care for children throughout the state of Ohio.

Only a few of us are directly involved in providing gender-affirming interventions, but all of us have cared for transgender, non-binary, and gender nonconforming youth. Many of us also participate in research and quality improvement projects to ensure that our patients receive the highest quality care possible. Every day, we are entrusted with the great privilege of caring for Ohio's most vulnerable youth. For us, the individuals who will be impacted by this bill are not abstract characters - we know their names and faces, their families, their pets, their hopes and dreams for the future. Our combined decades of lived experiences, together with our understanding of current scientific evidence, provides each of us with the knowledge that gender-affirming medical interventions are safe and critically important options to have available for transgender youth. These interventions are not for all patients and are never initiated without parent/guardian consent as well as patient assent; as such, **this bill would deprive eligible patients, parents, and families of their right to healthcare choices that are known to save lives. We support the fundamental right of patients and their families to make their own healthcare decisions**, and know that we share these values and priorities with the people of Ohio as well as the esteemed members of this legislative body.

Although a few isolated physicians have testified in support of this bill, their positions do not reflect the views of the vast majority of us who care for the children of this state; we therefore feel compelled to testify **against** House Bill 68 on behalf of our past, current, and future patients, as well as their families.

Our scientific, ethical, and philosophical objections to this bill are aligned with those of the many professional organizations (American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, American Counseling Association, American Public Health Association, American Psychological Association, and the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine, among others) who support gender affirming care and those who have testified against House Bill 68, and include the following:

**1. The science thus far overwhelmingly supports the medical and psychological benefits of gender-affirming care.** Many professional organizations comprised of scientific experts who have vetted all available data support gender-affirming care.

**2. Gender-affirming care is administered according to vetted standards:**

- Gender care for adolescents includes a multidisciplinary team of experts including mental health and medical professionals.
- Gender care is not addressed medically until after puberty begins – at which point over 90% of patients persist in their gender identity.
- No medical intervention occurs without **parental/guardian consent and patient assent.**
- Gender care for adolescents is often confused with adult care; in reality, surgeries are rarely initiated before age 18.
- When medically indicated, the use of puberty blocking medications allow patients and families to pause pubertal progression and provide more time to consider the decision to proceed with further care rather than rush to treatment. Puberty blockers have been used safely for decades to treat patients experiencing precocious puberty, in whom puberty resumes its usual course after these medications are stopped.

**3. This bill takes decision-making for what parents feel is most appropriate and safe for their children's health out of their hands.** As a result, it disempowers parents and allows policy created by those not trained in medicine to direct private medical decisions best made between families and the licensed and highly educated medical providers who know them. Furthermore, while many people struggle with their personal feelings about gender care, studies also show that the majority of people do not want physician-recommended medical care for youth that is supported by their parents to be outlawed.

**4. Denying evidence-based care to those who would benefit from care creates significant healthcare inequities and perpetuates discrimination.**

**5. Similar laws passed in other states have resulted in health care providers trained in complex, interdisciplinary care for children and adolescents to leave those states.** We worry that in restricting the ability to provide evidenced-based pediatric care for all children, we run the risk of harming not only gender diverse children and their families, but also reducing the already limited access to critically needed subspecialty care for all children within the state of Ohio.

As healthcare providers collectively entrusted by thousands of Ohio families to care for their children, **we conclude that House Bill 68 would undermine the health and well-being of children and the parental rights of our patients' families.** On their behalf, we ask you to vote "no" to this legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today against House Bill 68; we would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Kevin K. Makino, MD, PhD

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- Michael Redovian, MD
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- Ellen Ballerene, MD
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#### Supplemental References:

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(<https://www.socialworkers.org/News/News-Releases/ID/2642/Gender-Affirming-Health-Care-Saves-Lives>)