



GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT  
COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date 12/5/2023

Name: Marianne Jones Ford

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Organization Representing: Marianne Jones Ford LLC, Attorney at Law

Testifying on Bill Number: House Bill 68

Testimony:  Verbal  Written  Both

Testifying As:  Proponent  Opponent  Interested Party

Are you a Registered Lobbyist?  Yes  No

Special Requests: \_\_\_\_\_

December 6, 2023

Marianne Jones Ford  
Parent of Trans child  
Attorney at Law  
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RE: HB68

Chair Kristina D. Roegner, Vice Chair Niraj Antani, Ranking Member Paula Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Government Oversight Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to add my voice in opposition to House Bill 68 (HB68). My name is Marianne, and I grew up in Waynesville, Ohio in Warren County. I attended undergraduate at Ohio University, majoring in Political Science and English. I am a lifelong Ohio constituent. Immediately following my graduation from OU in 1999, I moved to Cincinnati to attend the University of Cincinnati College of Law. I earned my Juris Doctor in May 2002. I passed the Ohio Bar that fall and the Kentucky Bar in Spring 2004.

I speak to you today as a parent and an Ohio citizen and engaged voter. Greater than that though, I am a child advocate. I became an attorney solely to represent the best interests of abused and neglected children. I learned about the role of a Guardian *ad Litem* (GAL) Attorney as a teenager, and that became my goal. I sought to be the person I needed as a child. I served hundreds of children in Hamilton County for over 16 years. I worked closely with each child, their teachers, mental health professionals, family members, group home staff, residential home staff, foster parents, medical professionals, and children's services case workers to make the best decisions, in nearly every aspect of their lives, for each individual child based on their documented needs.

Not once as a GAL Attorney did I consult any members of my legislature in my decision-making process. Why? Because each child had a right to privacy, to which the care team and I were bound, to make medical decisions based on each child's best interests without interference from others, including our legislature. HB68 violates transgender and nonbinary children's right to privacy and denies access to

lifesaving medical services. Our state government should not be interfering in any child's individual medical and mental health decisions or access to recommended services. Yet HB68 does exactly that.

My work as a GAL better prepared me to advocate for my own transgender child. She knew her correct gender and articulated it at four years old. At the time Cincinnati Children's Hospital and Medical Center had not yet opened their Gender Clinic. Thankfully it opened while she was in first grade. Her Father and I received recommendations from qualified medical and mental health professionals to support her social transition at the end of first grade. Finally allowing our daughter to present herself as she had seen herself for years resulted in a happier, healthier child. Everyone noticed the positive change in her affect after her transition. Today she is 16 and thriving. This is the best decision we could have made for our child to meet her individual medical and mental health needs.

HB68 would take away my daughter's access to needed medical services that she has received for several years. Yet, these are the medical interventions for which I am most thankful. She too has the right to privacy, which includes the right to participate with her professional care team to make medical decisions without government interference. Her Father and I also enjoy the same well-established right to privacy as parents to raise our child without governmental interference, unless our decisions have resulted in harm. In this instance, if HB68 passes, the government will cause my daughter physical and emotional harm. My greatest fear is suicide if she is denied access to her lifesaving medical services.

I have endured child loss both professionally and personally. I carried twins who arrived at only 26 weeks gestation. They each weighed less than two pounds. I have one angel baby, and one healthy child here with me. I credit the Gender Clinic and the services they provide for my daughter continuing to thrive and remain healthy. HB68 threatens her safety, as well as thousands more children in Ohio. Singling out transgender and nonbinary children in Ohio and denying their access to lifesaving medical services is discriminatory and rooted in fear. This bill will result in actual harm to children as they are denied the medical care their team has determined appropriate, including my own daughter.

Please listen to your constituents, especially the parents of transgender and nonbinary children.

Please listen to the many professional advocates, including Physicians, therapists, teachers, and attorneys like me who have dedicated our professional work to serving children in an attempt to keep them safe, healthy, and alive.

Thank you for taking the time to listen. I welcome your questions.