

Dear Chairwoman Roegner, and the Ohio Senate Government Oversight Committee members,

I am Leo Ward of Hilliard, Ohio, and I am a transgender man. I am writing this testimony in opposition to the cruel attack on my community in House Bill 68. I have lived fully and openly as a man for three years, and have been receiving gender-affirming hormone therapy since 2022, when I was sixteen years old. Gender dysphoria for trans children such as myself is painful, seeing the way my body changed during puberty caused me immense mental harm. Hormone therapy has given me the opportunity to love life. I can finally be myself, wholly and truly, in the way I know I am. I made the decision to begin gender-affirming care with my father and my medical team, it was not a hasty decision, and was made with my lifelong health in mind. Continuing through puberty and development and living my life as a woman would have led to my death. I can say that with absolute certainty. Instead, I have a future. I have a long life ahead of me, full of joy, love, and opportunity. Gender-affirming care made that possible for me and all of the other trans youth in Ohio who have received this life saving treatment.

I am not alone in my joy. Trans youth around the world are being given a chance at a joyful life through gender-affirming treatment, and peer-reviewed science agrees. A Dutch study by Maria van der Loos, et al., found that less than two percent of transgender children taking hormone blockers, the earliest medical intervention for transgender children that only begins at the onset of puberty, did not continue on to cross-sex hormone therapy, the next step in gender transition. 98% is a staggeringly high rate of continuation. In 2017, using findings from the TransYouth Project and other published research, researchers at the University of Washington showed that children show confidence in their gender identity from age three. Both researchers and trans youth are confident that we know our own gender identity. I know I am a man. I know

it for a fact for the rest of my life. I've known for years. The only thing that stopped me from coming out earlier was that I didn't know I had the option of transition- if I had known about transgender people when I was five, I would've transitioned when I was five.

I implore this committee to discard this harmful bill. This will do irreparable damage to the bodies and minds of trans kids. There will be suffering. There will be pain. There will be death. An unsupportive environment is the leading cause of suicidality in LGBT kids according to the Trevor Project, with transgender kids having the highest rates of suicidal ideation and attempts of all groups surveyed due to the devastating consequences, like irreversible changes from puberty, that lack of support brings for trans kids. The support of my family, friends, community, and medical intervention has prevented me from taking my own life.

This bill brings death. This bill brings pain. This committee has the capability to stop all of this suffering. Please, for the sake of your constituents, for the sake of the Ohioan children that will be harmed, do not allow this bill to go any further.

My Sources:

Olson, Kristina R., and Selin Gülgöz. "Early Findings From the TransYouth Project: Gender Development in Transgender Children." *Child Development Perspectives*, vol. 12, no. 2, Wiley, Nov. 2017, pp. 93–97. *Crossref*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12268>.

van der Loos, Maria Anna Theodora Catharina et al. "Continuation of gender-affirming hormones in transgender people starting puberty suppression in adolescence: a cohort study in the Netherlands." *The Lancet. Child & adolescent health* vol. 6,12 (2022): 869-875. doi:10.1016/S2352-4642(22)00254-1

“2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health.” *The Trevor Project*,

www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2022.