



Kelly Blankenship, DO
Ohio Children's Hospital Association
House Bill 68 Opponent Testimony before Ohio Senate
Wednesday, December 6, 2023

Chairman Roegner, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Hick-Hudson, and members of the Senate House Government Oversight Committee. My name is Kelly Blankenship and I am the Associate Chief Medical Officer for Behavioral Health at Dayton Children's Hospital in Dayton. As a board-certified pediatric psychiatrist who treats children and teens every day, I am submitting this written testimony in opposition to Substitute House Bill 68

It is so unfathomable to hear the statements made regarding what pediatric providers do and don't do when treating youth who are expressing a conflict between the sex they were assigned at birth and the gender with which they identify. This false narrative is intended to incite fear in order to take away parental rights and restrict health care.

The American Medical Association, (AMA) states that gender dysphoria is a serious medical condition which can be associated with significant negative health outcomes including depression, anxiety, self-harm, sexually transmitted infections, and drug and alcohol abuse. Peer-reviewed research published in medical journals has shown that gender-affirming health care improves these outcomes.

At Dayton Children's Hospital, all service lines within our hospital follow national standards of care to ensure quality, safety, and deliver best outcomes. All care delivered is age-appropriate, and aligned with clinical practice guidelines based on research. Every individual and family who comes to one of our facilities does so voluntarily. We have no agenda other than to serve patients and utilize the best available research to optimize their well-being.

While we do not currently have a specific gender dysphoria clinic at Dayton Children's, any medical gender dysphoria treatment is supported by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals, including pediatric specialists in psychiatry, adolescent medicine, and endocrinology and all requires parental consent.

Our health care providers evaluate all symptoms, and patients are screened and evaluated for all comorbid mental health conditions before determining if treatment is needed. We seek to ensure that the decision of each parent is informed by medically sound information and is free from coercion or undue influence. Consistent with Dayton Children's Hospital policies and procedures, and applicable laws, parental consent for minors is required for all care at Dayton Children's Hospital. Parents are asked to provide consent to treatment prior to their child's diagnostic assessment and any treatment, including counseling. Parents are also asked to sign written informed consent forms prior to the initiation of any treatment. In cases of care for adolescent children, these children are also asked for consent to treatments.

Again, Dayton Children's does not perform hysterectomies, or any genital surgeries, as part of gender-affirming medical care. The care provided by the medical and mental health professionals at Dayton Children's is all evidence-based.

We believe all young people should have access to comprehensive, developmentally appropriate, mental health care and gender-affirming health care provided in a safe and inclusive environment. Transgender children, adolescents, and their families deserve care that is grounded in science, compassion and ethics.

In addition, the current version of HB 68 places higher barriers to access to mental health care for this condition, higher than for another condition. We should never make it harder to access mental health care for our children at a time when our children are in crisis.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 68. I would appreciate your careful consideration of the harmful implications this bill would have on kids and families, and urge you to vote no on this bill.

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