

Ohio Chapter

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American Academy
of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

November 16th, 2022

The Honorable Susan Manchester
Chair, House Families, Aging and Human Services Committee
Ohio House of Representatives
Ohio Statehouse
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chairwoman Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Denson and members of the House Families, Aging and Human Services Committee—

On behalf of the approximately 3,000 members of the Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, I am writing today to express our strong opposition to House Bill 454, legislation that would harm Ohio's children by restricting access to certain types of gender-affirming care. As Ohio's largest pro-child advocacy organization, we urge the committee to reject this dangerous bill.

First, I want to state clearly that Ohio's pediatricians care deeply for the children they serve. These are physicians who have dedicated their lives to keep kids healthy and they take on an enormous responsibility each day to treat children and their families. During some of the hearings on HB 454, proponents of the measure have made misleading and offensive allegations about the conduct of Ohio's pediatricians and children's hospitals. Any claim that a provider is rendering care without parental consent or withholding information from patient families is disturbing. Further, if these allegations had merit then these individuals could pursue civil action or file a complaint with the State Medical Board. Our members adhere to the highest ethical standards and care for the health and wellbeing of their patients above all else.

In 2018, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a policy statement titled, "[Ensuring Comprehensive Care and Support for Transgender and Gender-Diverse Children and Adolescents](#)." I strongly encourage the members of this committee to review this document, which provides evidence-based recommendations for how pediatricians should care for transgender youth and their families. According to the 2018 statement, "The decision of whether and when to initiate gender-affirmative treatment is personal and involves careful consideration of risks, benefits, and other factors unique to each patient and family." This sentence could easily be used to describe any number of treatments for different medical and behavioral health conditions. Regardless of the child or the diagnosis, pediatricians must provide accurate information to parents and seek their consent.

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HB 454 is even more concerning because it limits the rights of parents to determine the appropriate course of action for their children. While I anticipate proponents of HB 454 would likely not want their child to receive gender-affirming care, neither these individuals nor this committee should have the right to take away the ability of parents to direct care for their children. We are deeply concerned over the precedent set by HB 454 in limiting parental rights and feel that this concern, above all others, is grounds to reject this harmful proposal.

Gender-affirming care clinics and the emergence of an evidence-based model of care reflects the growing need for these critical services. Most of the services provided to transgender children revolves around mental health treatment and, if a patient does progress to a medical intervention, mental health services remain at the core of their treatment. Further, none of the children's hospitals in Ohio provide surgical procedures to minors for gender conversion. Any claim to the contrary is inaccurate and disrespectful to pediatricians across Ohio. Additionally, any insinuation that pediatricians are providing gender-affirming care (or any other type of care) for financial benefit is offensive and should be immediately rejected. Proponents of this bill may resort to name-calling and misinformation, but our members have more respect for the legislative process and the members of this committee.

In closing, I want to again stress that HB 454 is harmful as it targets vulnerable children, restricts parental rights, and is based upon inaccurate and misleading statements. Pediatricians are committed to the health of their patients and parents assume the ultimate responsibility to direct the care of their children. The General Assembly has no business second guessing parents and providers or passing legislation that will ultimately harm children. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melissa Wervey Arnold". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Melissa Wervey Arnold
Chief Executive Officer