



**Written Testimony Opposing HB 454**  
**Submitted by Dr. Ben Huelskamp**  
**Executive Director, LOVEboldly**

Chairwoman Manchester and Members of the House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee:

On behalf of the Board and community of LOVEboldly, an Ohio faith-based nonprofit working to create spaces where LGBTQIA+ people can flourish in Christianity, I write to strongly oppose House Bill 454 known as the “Save Adolescents from Experimentation” Act. As people of faith in the Christian tradition we are convinced that God creates each person in God’s image and likeness and calls them good including LGBTQIA+ people. We join our loving God in celebrating the richness of Queer identities including Transgender people.

HB 454 is not only antithetical to our deeply held religious beliefs, but it also embraces false, misleading, and pseudoscientific positions to strip transgender youth of their dignity and the physical and mental health care that they need and that they deserve. The very name of the act leads the casual observer to believe that gender affirming care is not supported by science and that it is somehow harmful. The truth is that gender affirming care saves lives and provides the time and space for transgender youth to fully explore and determine their identities and the best expression of those identities as adults.

Youth experiencing gender dysphoria who receive gender affirming care are assisted in socially transitioning first through changes in name, gender expression, and other means which have been shown to greatly reduce the anxiety and depression associated with gender dysphoria. Social transitioning is fully reversible. The use of puberty blockers is an additional step employed to allow for more time for transgender youth to fully explore their identities. Puberty blockers are also a fully reversible medical intervention which are used in other situations including the abnormally early onset of puberty (for which they have been approved by the FDA since 1993). Claims of surgical interventions for transgender youth are largely exaggerated and sensationalized in the media. In reality, the use of surgery is often limited to transgender adults and some older adolescents who have shown a consistent gender identity which is different than their sex assigned at birth.

In addition to religious and medical arguments, it bears remembering that recent attempts to enact similar legislation have been met with caution from the federal government and judicial oversight. When the State of Arkansas passed a very similar bill, a federal judge blocked the legislation. Subsequently, the Division of Civil Rights at the Department of Justice issued guidance to states attorneys general regarding attempts to enact laws which would violate the constitutional and federally protected rights of LGBTQIA+ people.

Transgender youth in Ohio and everywhere need to be provided robust, scientifically informed, and gender affirming care to allow them the best possible environment to explore their identities and reach mature understandings of who they are and how they will interact with the world. Through a

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30 E. College Ave., Westerville, OH 43081 | EIN: 81-1869501

www.loveboldly.net | admin@loveboldly.net | 859.904.8056



medically supervised process of social, emotional, and biological interventions, transgender youth are supported and affirmed in the dignity of care inherent in their status as humans and as children of God.

As Christians, as people of faith, and as Ohioans, we urge you to reject HB 454 and let transgender youth know that their civil leaders will not be swept up in the frenzy of sensationalism but will support them and acknowledge their God-given dignity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Benjamin Z. Huelskamp".

Dr. Benjamin Z. Huelskamp  
Executive Director  
LOVEboldly  
[bhuelskamp@loveboldly.net](mailto:bhuelskamp@loveboldly.net)  
[www.loveboldly.net](http://www.loveboldly.net)  
30 E College Ave.  
Westerville, OH 43081

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