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Statement of Opposition to House Bill 68

The Society for Sexual, Affectional, Intersex, and Gender Expansive Identities of Ohio (SAIGEO), are publishing this statement to express strong opposition to the passage of House Bill 68 and recognize the significant impact this legislation will have on our community.

SAIGEO, representing clinical mental health counselors, school counselors, counselor educators, and counselors-in-training, is dedicated to promoting awareness and understanding of sexual, affectional, intersex, and gender expansive identities (LGBTQIA+). Our mission encompasses fostering inclusivity among counseling professionals and related helping occupations.

It is important to re-emphasize that House Bill 68 creates unnecessary barriers to accessing vital services, fosters distrust for mental health professionals, and implies gender exploration is solely linked to trauma. This legislation will increase barriers to treatment, potentially leading to misdiagnosed or inaccurate treatment of Ohio's youth. House Bill 68 implies that providers are not screening clients for additional mental health challenges or ruling out other potential diagnoses, disregarding the ethical considerations of comorbidities and differential diagnoses. Additionally, the assertion that youths' gender exploration is solely linked to trauma or mental health difficulties is misleading, dangerous, and fallacious. House Bill 68 will create unnecessary barriers to accessing and providing gender affirming health services, increasing the risk of untreated, undiagnosed, and misdiagnosed mental and emotional disorders among Ohio's youth. SAIGEO strongly opposes any bill that narrows the path to accessing services.

Children experiencing challenges with their gender identity need comprehensive and interdisciplinary care provided by appropriately skilled experts. Ethical counselors provide gender-affirming care, creating a safe space for exploration, processing, and understanding while collaborating with clients and their families. Gender affirming care is an evidence based treatment approach and widely recognized as appropriate treatment for gender dysphoria. The restriction of access to these services will undoubtedly increase the challenges for our trans and gender expansive youth.



Furthermore, House Bill 68 includes provisions prohibiting transgender girls from participating in sports in Ohio. We believe that existing guidelines established by the Ohio High School Athletic Association effectively safeguarded women's sports and provide an opportunity for transgender girls to engage. Participation in team sports during middle and high school is advantageous for all children, benefiting them socially and academically. The provision in House Bill 68 deprives transgender girls of a significant activity crucial to their overall well-being.

In conclusion, SAIGEO remains resolutely opposed to House Bill 68, acknowledging the profound ramifications it could have on our community. While we maintain our stance against this legislation, we recognize the potential for legal challenges and maintain hope that it will be declared unconstitutional through appropriate legal channels. Additionally, SAIGEO is committed to continuing our exploration of the intricate impacts of offering legal and ethical counseling services to minors, prioritizing the protection and preservation of the rights and well-being of all individuals.

Sincerely,

The Society for Sexual, Affectional, Intersex, and Gender Expansive Identities of Ohio