

# HB616: Letter Writing Campaign

## What is House Bill 616?

House Bill 616, colloquially entitled the “Don’t Say Gay, Don’t Say Race” bill is floated legislation from outside of Ohio that made its way to the House State and Local Government Committee. Sponsored by Representative Loychik and Representative Schmidt, HB616 takes one step further than those previous iterations against honest education by banning the following specific tools of antiracism: Critical Race Theory, the “1619 Project,” diversity, equity, and inclusion learning outcomes, and more. In addition, this proposed bill would prohibit school boards from allowing students to read books that would “promote divisive or inherent racist concepts.” This bill outlines those divisive or inherently racist concepts as including but not limited to the following:

- Critical Race Theory
- The 1619 Project
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Values

Furthermore, this bill would explicitly ban teaching about sexual orientation and gender-identity in grades K-3, and only allow “developmentally appropriate” mentions in grades 4-12. This could leave transgender, gender-nonconforming, and questioning children out of options to learn about the gender expansiveness that exists in the world. If passed, this bill would anchor Ohio’s children in ignorance and darkness, and make them uncompetitive in the diverse, progressive, emerging Ohio that we are building.

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## Take Action Against HB616!

Currently, the bill has had its first sponsor hearing. This fall, the Committee may hear one proponent hearing and one opponent hearing—or they might not hear it at all. *This is where we need your help.* Write to the Committee Chair to let the Committee know that Ohioans do not want this bill advance to the House Floor for a vote!

Chair Scott Wiggam

Email: rep01@ohiohouse.gov

Address: 71 South High Street, 13th Floor, Columbus OH 43215

## Talking Points & Tips

- Introduce yourself and your connection to HB616 (i.e. My name is x, and I am a teacher/childcare worker, parent, advocate, etc.)
- State your opposition to the bill, and explain why: “I am writing to you today in strong opposition of HB616 because...”
- Reasons for opposition could be any of the following, but not limited to:
  - HISTORICAL ACCURACY: HB616 would negate historical accuracy in favor of censorship and the whitewashing of history. Educators know how to teach to their classrooms with accuracy and nuance, to teach the true history of the nation.
  - DEMOCRACY: honest education promotes civic engagement and participation in society. Without knowing our past, we cannot protect and build our future.
  - TEACHING SOFT SKILLS AND NAVIGATING RACIAL CLIMATES: more and more employers desire employees with good soft skills to navigate human-to-human interaction. These skills ready our children for an increasingly diversifying world.

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## Talking Points & Tips

- PROTECTING LGBTQ+ KIDS: Children with LGBTQ+ identities deserve to see their identities reflected in course material. Considering that they are among the most vulnerable to higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation, etc. they deserve to not feel alone in the classroom.
- FOSTERS ECONOMIC COMPETITION: Employers will seek to build and invest in an Ohio that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion values. This bill, if passed, will signal to these businesses that Ohio is sliding backwards rather than pursuing a competitive, diverse future.
- We recommend using a personal story and reason as to why you do not want this bill and end with a strong ask to NOT move the bill forward.

## Impact on Students

HB616 will diminish resources and protections for students.

- For LGBTQ+ students who are not out to their parents yet, school might be the only place where they can be their authentic selves.
- The bill might even disallow clubs in school, like Gay Straight Trans Alliance groups
- LGBTQ+ students are already at a greater risk for suicide, homelessness, abuse, and human trafficking. That number triples if that student is a person of color.

### Mental Health

- More than 40% of LGBTQ+ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year. Of those surveyed, 94% said recent politics negatively impacted their mental health.
- Child psychologists say it's important for a child's wellbeing that they see themselves and their families represented in stories

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## Impact on Students

- The bill wants to discourage the growing number of nonwhite students, as they reach voting age, from seeing systemic discrimination as a problem that public policy should address.
- All students deserve an honest and accurate education in an open, supportive, culturally-responsive environment.

## Impact on Parents

- The bill would stop teachers from recognizing the family units of students with LGBTQ+ parents
- Parents of Trans and LGBTQ+ students think more education on sexual orientation and gender identity would help their children feel more welcome and protected at school
- Although the bill is known as the parental rights bill, many LGBTQ+ parents and BIPOC parents feel that this bill would diminish their parental rights and their children's rights to an honest education.
- Children with LGBTQ+ parents may feel othered and stigmatized because their families are not being represented and they aren't allowed to discuss LGBTQ+ families
- By making sexuality, gender and race taboo topics at school, students will feel like they can't talk about these things at home, or like they may have to hide parts of themselves from their parents. This will erode the parent-child relationship.

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## Practical Impacts in the Classroom

- HB616 would suppress dialogue around race, gender and sexuality, which threatens student's freedom to learn and spreads an inaccurate understanding of our history and our lived realities.
- "Whitewashing history"
- HB616 would allow anyone to make a complaint against a teacher, who could lose their job, and school districts could lose funding if they don't comply. HB616 gives the Ohio Board of Education final say on what is considered divisive, the same organization that just recently took back its anti-racism resolution.
- Censoring free speech in the classroom
  - Teachers will have to self-censor, avoiding lessons on race or anti-racism, out of fear of breaking the rules. This censorship may cause teachers to quit the profession altogether
  - Teachers may have to pull banned books from the classroom
  - It could censor regular conversations about the experiences and families of LGBTQ+ students
- It would ban any textbook, instructional materials or curriculum that includes concepts such as diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- The bill implies that talking about LGBTQ+ issues with children is somehow predatory or inherently sexual
- The bill would further stigmatize and erase already vulnerable LGBTQ+ students and BIPOC students

# HB454: Letter Writing Campaign

## What is House Bill 454?

House Bill 454, colloquially entitled the anti-trans healthcare bill, poses a threat to transgender and gender nonconforming youth. The bill, named the “Save Adolescents from Experimentation” (SAFE) act, would prohibit gender-affirming care for transgender minors. Gender-affirming care is a life-saving method of medical care for youth who show signs of or identify as transgender.

Gender-affirming care is a holistic method of medical care, ranging from social affirmation through use of gendered clothing and name changes, to hormone blockers to delay puberty and cross-sex hormones to promote the proper development for transgender youth. Hormone blockers are completely reversible, and cross-sex hormones are partially reversible. It is widely viewed by medical professionals as the best method of treatment for transgender youth, and despite this, sponsors Representative Click and Representative Grendell are pushing this proposed language onto Ohio’s youth.

Currently, the bill is in the House Families, Aging and Human Services Committee, and has heard two proponent testimony hearings, as well as a third limited opponent testimony which centered the voices of medical professionals who administer these services.

# HB454: Letter Writing Campaign

## What is House Bill 454?

Banning gender affirming healthcare for transgender youth would effectively cut off wraparound services for transgender youth who struggle with gender dysphoria. According to leading organization, Equality Ohio, it would prohibit the following:

- Counselors and educators from concealing or encouraging adolescents to conceal their feelings of gender dysphoria from their parents.
- Referrals for medicalized treatments for minors with Gender Dysphoria
- Medicaid from covering the cost of SRS for minors.
- Any requirement for private insurers to cover medicalized treatments for gender dysphoria in adolescents.
- Hormone blockers for Gender Dysphoria prior to the age of 18.
- Cross-sex hormones for youth experiencing gender dysphoria prior to the age of 18.
- Surgical interventions or Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) for minors.
- Hospitals and clinicians would potentially be de-licensed under this bill's language for performing gender affirming care and might face civil lawsuits. The bill also threatens to take away all public funding to hospitals who participate in gender affirming care.

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## Take Action Against HB454!

While the legislature is on break this summer, we need your help to write to Chair Manchester to let her know that we as Ohioans do not want this bill, and that Ohio is no place for transphobia:

Chair Susan Manchester  
rep84@ohiohouse.gov  
77 South High Street, 11th Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

## Talking Points & Tips

As always, we encourage you to include personal stories to show Ohio's legislators that we do not want this bill in Ohio.

- Introduce yourself and your connection to HB454 (i.e. My name is x, and I am a teacher/childcare worker, parent, advocate, etc.)
- State your opposition to the bill, and explain why: "I am writing to you today in strong opposition of HB454 because..." Reasons for opposition could be any of the following, but not limited to:
  - PROTECTING TRANSGENDER CHILDREN: transgender children face much higher rates of suicidality and mental health conditions than their cisgender peers. If we take away mental health services like gender affirming counseling, we are taking away much needed support
  - LEGISLATING A PROBLEM WE DO NOT HAVE: Hospitals in Ohio follow guidelines. They do not perform gender reassignment surgery for people under the age of 18. This legislation attacks transgender youth for a problem they are not facing.

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## Talking Points & Tips

- **REDUCE STIGMATIZATION:** transgender people already face so much stigmatization in Ohio and across the nation. We do not want this misinformed legislation to add to their difficulties in getting the care they need.
- **THE REDUCTION OF PUBLIC MONEY INTO HOSPITALS:** this legislation would take away public funding to hospitals who have gender-affirming care practices, which would destabilize the medical industry in Ohio, simply for following best practices. Doctors and medical professionals will be faced with the impossible choice of facing de-licensure, getting slapped with lawsuits, or creating instability for their hospital if they do their jobs and provide best practice medical care, thereby violating their medical oaths and ethics.

