

Testimony in Opposition to Bill 1450:

Chairperson and Committee Members,

I am a mental health professional, and I strongly urge you to reconsider Bill 1450 due to its potentially harmful effects on minors, particularly in the context of sensitive medical and therapeutic care. As a mental health provider, I have seen firsthand the importance of confidentiality in creating a safe space for minors to discuss topics such as mental health, sexual and reproductive health, substance use, and family issues. This bill, however, would force parents or guardians into examination rooms during these sensitive discussions, which could significantly undermine the trust that minors need to feel comfortable speaking openly about their health.

Minors, especially those dealing with mental health or behavioral challenges, have a fundamental right to privacy when discussing personal and sensitive matters. This bill disregards the vital need for minors to have confidential interactions with healthcare professionals, especially when discussing potentially traumatic issues. When parents are required to be present during these discussions, it could prevent minors from sharing critical information about their health, fears, or struggles.

Furthermore, from my perspective as a mental health provider, this bill could create significant barriers when it comes to assessing minors who are being abused. If an abuser is present in the room during therapy or medical appointments, it severely limits the minor's ability to disclose abuse and receive the help they need. In cases of abuse, confidentiality is often the only means of allowing a child to speak freely and safely without fear of retaliation or further harm. Requiring a parent or guardian's presence could prevent the minor from disclosing abuse, putting their safety and well-being at greater risk.

While the bill offers privacy screens and notifications regarding standardized questions, these measures fail to address the core issue—the presence of an abuser or controlling figure in a therapeutic setting could be incredibly harmful to the minor. The minor's right to speak freely and receive confidential care should be prioritized above all.

I strongly believe that minors should be able to communicate openly and confidentially with healthcare providers, particularly when it comes to addressing potential abuse and sensitive health matters. This bill, in its current form, would create barriers to that care and potentially exacerbate existing issues of abuse or neglect.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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