

Chairwoman Abrams, Vice Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown, and Members of the Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify as a proponent of HB 245, the Adult Cabaret Act. My name is Jana Warnecke, and I am a chapter leader of the nonprofit organization, Gays Against Groomers. I stand before you to express our strong support for Ohio House Bill 245, a pivotal piece of legislation that aims to protect our vulnerable youth from being prematurely exposed to sexual material or performances in unauthorized locations. This bill would be a step in the right direction of regulating adult entertainment to protect juveniles and uphold community standards.

Firstly, we would like to commend the sponsors of this bill for their commitment to safeguarding our community. The specific parameters and the clear definitions laid out in HB 245 are nothing short of exemplary. This bill would prohibit a person from recklessly engaging in an adult cabaret performance in a location other than an adult cabaret business. For example, nightclub, bar, juice bar, restaurant, bottle club, or similar commercial establishments, regardless of whether alcoholic beverages are served.

In our view, Ohio House Bill 245 sets the gold standard for legislation in combating the unnecessary exposure of sexual materials or adult entertainment performances where children may be present. The meticulous attention to detail in defining what constitutes an “unlawful adult cabaret performance” sends a strong message that the state of Ohio is taking a zero-tolerance approach. By classifying this bill as a fourth or fifth-degree felony, the bill appropriately recognizes the severity of the crime and ensures that those who engage in such predatory behavior face the consequences they deserve.

Now, we wouldn't be shocked if this bill faced some opposition, but let's be clear, anyone opposing this bill is, in essence, telling on themselves. Those who resist measures to combat the unnecessary exposure of sexual content to juveniles are, knowingly or unknowingly, aligning themselves with those who seek to exploit and harm children. We cannot afford to allow ourselves to be manipulated by opposition that claims this bill is hateful towards LGBTQ people. We are here to reassure you it is not.

It's Pride Month, a time when we should be celebrating the progress we've made towards equality, acceptance, and the freedom to live our lives as everyone else does. But instead, we find ourselves here. Because, we feel compelled to address an issue that is actively damaging our community.

Drag shows for kids, with performers wearing plastic breasts and sexualized costumes, have nothing to do with what it means to be gay. This is not what Pride was about. The overwhelming majority of us just want to live our lives without fear of persecution.

Cabaret shows are not only inappropriate for young children, but it also sends a regressive and harmful message. This is not a positive representation. It is disrespectful to the generations of people who fought for our rights.

These drag shows for kids are not challenging regressive stereotypes, they are reinforcing them. They are taking the progress we have made towards acceptance and pushing it back. Our

community is not a monolith, and we do not condone this behavior. We are a diverse community, made up of people from all walks of life, and we will not be defined by the actions of a few.

In conclusion, Ohio House Bill 245 is a strong bill worth supporting, setting a precedent for effective legislation on regulating adult entertainment for the protection of juveniles and the community. We implore this honorable body to recognize the urgency and necessity of passing this bill to ensure the safety and well-being of innocent children who deserve to stay innocent for as long as possible. The children are the future, so let's stand united in our responsibility to protect them. Thank you for your time and consideration today of my testimony today in support of HB 245.