

October 8, 2023

Dear Chair Young, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on House Bill 183.

My name is Carmen Kahlo and I am the mother of a transgender 8 year old daughter in the inclusive, welcoming city of Lakewood, Ohio. We love living in Lakewood for many reasons, but the main one is how accepting, accomodating, and affirming our daughter's school district has been to our family. We are a family of entrepreneurs, college educated, and I am a former elementary teacher.

I would like to start this testimony with a true story. My daughter plays on the Lakewood United Football Club's girls' team. Amongst hundreds of kids who play for this league, she is the only transgender girl in the entire club. For all intents and purposes, she looks like a girl: she has beautiful dark eyes, long eyelashes, and the cutest curls and freckles. Her team and coaches know she is transgender, and no one seems to care. Also on the team, is a cisgender girl named Claire. This girl is not traditionally feminine looking, and to be honest, looks a lot like a cisgender boy. She wears her hair very short, has no feminine features, and wears boyish looking clothes and has boyish mannerisms. At the end of one particular game, a very annoyed father from the opposing team approached our coaches and demanded to know why a "boy" was playing on the team...and pointed to Claire. Fortunately, neither Claire nor her parents were around to hear this very assumptive and very wrong misgendering of my daughter's teammate.

Now, this brings me to HB 183, which is another bill targeted at my child, and many other parents' children. Above I mentioned our daughter's school, and how wonderful they are. This past April (2023) the principal, social emotional learning teacher, parent liason, my husband, myself, and our daughter met to complete the district-adopted gender identity plan, which included bathroom usage. Everyone discussed that our daughter could use the girls' restroom, but beginning in August of this year, so that she could start the school year fresh. Upon hearing this, my daughter burst into tears and put her head down on her hands, tears streaming down her eyes. It took an hour for her to agree to wait until August (she began social transitioning mid-second grade year), but once she did agree she was overjoyed that she could finally use the restroom of the gender she identified with. Now, this year in 3rd grade, she walks into the girls' bathroom with confidence, and her friends love bumping into her to chat when they see her. We are so grateful to have such an affirming, inclusive school district as Lakewood City Schools.

As a veteran elementary educator of 21 years I can tell you that educators and administrators have so much on their plates already: closing achievement gaps, classroom management, documentation, test scores, angry parents, and school safety, to name just a few. To now add potentially checking birth certificates before children enter a bathroom will surely guarantee even more educators will leave the profession. Children need love, patience, hope and acceptance from their teachers; they do not need that is stricter than voting to use the bathroom.

And what about the students who look like Claire, from the soccer team example above? Or what about cisgender boys who may look more feminine than their other male counterparts? Who will have the job to offend and misgender these children, all for the sake of making sure they don't enter the "wrong" bathroom? And what about all of the transgender children in Ohio schools that are currently and happily

using the restrooms of their choice? We will now take that freedom away from them, although I and many others are still uncertain why. Discrimination should have no place in our schools.

We have also not discussed safety. I can tell you from my own experience, whenever I walk into a bathroom at the park, my first fear is: What if there is a man hiding in here? It has NEVER been: What if there is a transgender woman hiding in here? There is no statistical data that children or women are being attacked by transgender women in bathrooms. There is plenty of statistical data that women are being attacked by cisgender men everywhere else though, and there is definitely statistical data that transgender women are being attacked and killed by cisgender men.

And if transgender men, as your bill proposes, are supposed to only use women's restrooms, won't women, according to your reasoning, be startled and frightened to see what appears to be a man walking into the restroom? And won't cisgender men, when seeing a transgender woman walk into a men's bathroom potentially harm that woman? No one will feel safe in this scenario. No one.

Considering that transpeople make up less than 1% of the US population, I respectfully ask that you not vote for HB183. Instead, I ask that we, as the citizens of the state of Ohio, focus on what matters: keeping children safe from bigotry and helping them feel loved for they are. Children in K-12 schools and the adults at the collegiate level don't need bathrooms free of transgender children and adults. They need an Ohio free from discrimination.

Thank you,

Carmen Kahlo