

My name is Brice Mickey. I am a resident of Cincinnati, OH, and I work as an equity and inclusion consultant with institutions both locally and across the country.

In 2018, I co-developed a summer camp for transgender youth, a refuge from a world where transgender bodies are constantly under siege. These kids just wanted to be kids, just wanted to attend any camp available to them. Other camps, though, excluded them. We were compelled to create a space where they felt safe until the world at large is safer for them.

Diversity and Inclusion practitioners know that students who feel welcome experience better outcomes concerning their mental and physical well-being, and this translates to better educational outcomes. That well-being is under fire. According to the ACLU, lawmakers have introduced 155 anti-trans bills in statehouses just this year - more than those introduced in 2018, 2019 and 2020 combined. HB183 is another in this long list of these anti-trans bills. As a Diversity and Inclusion consultant in the health care sector, I've heard passionate stories of how representation and education save young trans lives, and I am confident that opposition to this bill will support these students.

HB 183 will only further harm already-marginalized youth. This bill is written with language meant to create fear regarding the safety of children. A study from the UCLA School of Law has found no evidence that allowing trans people to use public facilities that align to their gender identity could increase any safety risks. On the other hand, very real health risks, including dehydration and bladder health, are present for trans students who avoid using the restroom - 63% of whom already report avoiding the use of public restrooms, according to a study by Gender Spectrum. .

This atmosphere of fear has reached a boiling point. Students are to fear their own gender nonconformity. Administrators are to fear hiring a transgender teacher, no matter how qualified they may be, because of the push to make that person illegal. As lawmakers on the national level pick up the effort to further marginalize and exclude the most vulnerable children in our schools, this bill emphasizes those same fears at the state level. And although school board members are supposed to be nonpartisan, this committee leads those local leaders to follow in your example as well.

Our institutions regularly fail transgender people, to the point where one of the students involved in our programming during my summer camp's creation reached out to me – not to the police, not to a health care provider, but me – when their friend was experiencing a life-threatening mental health crisis. They reached out to a Diversity and Inclusion consultant because they feared facing further violence based on their identity. If we aren't vigilant, what was once neglect and carelessness from our institutions will turn into outright hostility toward some of the children who need our help the most.

I urge you to face the challenges that are real and documented across our state, and not create problems for trans students who have a legal right to feel safe at school. Please oppose HB 183. .