

Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Higher Education Committee, Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in opposition to HB 183.

I did my undergraduate degree at Miami University and left Ohio for graduate school and jobs. My parents lived here and so we returned thirty-three years ago with our young children. We worked hard, raised our kids, took care of my folks. My former students work in nonprofits, business, and local government across Ohio and around the country. Retired, we volunteer with healthcare programs for pregnant women, infants, and children in the Miami Valley and we spend every moment we can with our children and six beautiful grandchildren.

Over decades, I have seen both the vulnerability and courage of transgender kids and young adults. I am the proud grandmother of a wonderful transgender pre-teen who is a volunteer in the community, a great student, a loving friend, a loving big brother, a member of a supportive church, and a child who is comfortable in his life and his identity—the identity that he started kindergarten with. I am very afraid of the cruel, misguided decisions that the Ohio House made last year and the decision before you today. These decisions, of course, fly in the face of best practices in medical care that are well established in Ohio. But more immediately important, these legislative decisions will tear my grandchild's life apart and may force three generations of our family to leave, to flee, Ohio.

Another family member transitioned over twenty years ago as a young adult after struggling with emotional and psychological pain. She couldn't articulate her experience because she did not have the words or examples in her life. This is what laws like this bathroom bill aim to do to our nonconforming children: to force them into the shadows by denying them the knowledge, the professional support, the family understanding, the medications that they desperately need to navigate their lives. As a young woman in transition, she lived in fear—leaving her workplace and walking a block to a cafe with single restrooms out of fear that police would be called whatever restroom she used. This legislation demands policing, engenders fear of trans people, and risks humiliating and even criminalizing anyone who doesn't look a certain way in a public place. You are seeking to revitalize and promote the climate of fear that she grew up with.

One young teen I met had been rejected by her family as she faced this profound struggle; separated from her siblings, only her grandmother stood by her. She walked into oncoming traffic one night. Fear, ignorance, pain, harassment, broken families, troubled schools, and blighted lives will be the result of your misguided legislation.

My bright and shining grandson, a dear, loving child, has a good life and that clearly is what you are afraid of, what this bill seeks to destroy. Sadly, as you hurt our family, you also put all children at risk, including your own, of learning to bully others from your example.

Marjorie McLellan