

Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, and Ranking Member Miller. Thank you for allowing me to address this committee about HB 183.

My name is Cam Ogden and I'm a former transgender child. After years of not being affirmed and having to fight for acceptance from my family and peers, I now stand before you as a proud transgender adult.

But I wasn't always this proud.

I spent a long time living as someone that I wasn't. I stayed in the closet because I wasn't supported at home and because I knew I would be treated harshly at school. One classmate of mine was also transgender. And unlike me, she was brave enough to be herself. Contrary to the theories believed by some, watching my friend leave school and cross a busy intersection to use the restroom didn't make me think being trans was "trendy".

It made me afraid.

I am a college student currently pursuing an education in Political Science and Data Analytics. Before that, I was a Mechanical Engineering student at The Ohio State University. I've spent a great deal of time on OSU and Columbus State's campuses, but even I wasn't aware of which restrooms HB 183 would force me to start using. So I looked at a map of the gender-neutral restrooms at Columbus State, and my girlfriend looked at what was available in the buildings on OSU campus where she studies and works.

What we found was upsetting. Many of the buildings in both of our daily schedules have no gender-neutral restroom. Notably, that includes the 24-hour library where my girlfriend works and the student lounge I study at on campus. My girlfriend has coworkers who are transgender, and I don't know what they will do while working. I know that the nearest gender-neutral restroom to my usual study spot is across the street in a parking garage.

Separating transgender people's public accommodations from cisgender people will not make anyone more safe. It will simply result in unequal access and treatment in school environments for transgender youth. However, I know that safety is a serious concern for those who support HB 183. I share that concern, but this bill does nothing to address that violence.

Sexual assault is a real and pervasive issue on college campuses and schools. We know that transgender people and cisgender women are assaulted on college campuses at the same rate. But it's not simply a statistical fact to me.

I have been sexually assaulted on campus. Two men saw me in my work jacket and pajama pants while I was staying the night at my girlfriend's dorm. They sexually assaulted me and called me homosexual slurs. I don't want to relive that horrific experience, but I will share one detail. I held my own mouth shut with my hands because I was terrified of being outed as transgender by my voice if I cried out. It was agony, but all I could think about as it happened was how much worse it could get if they found out I was also transgender.

Let that sink in.

One year ago I was sexually assaulted and felt terrified of what could happen if my attackers found out I was transgender. Six years ago I saw my friend cross the street to use the restroom and felt afraid of how I would be treated if my school found out I was transgender. Addressing this committee, I feel that same fear again. I'm afraid of how you will choose to treat me and the other students other students here today because we're transgender. Across the state, transgender youth are afraid of you.

Since I was assaulted, I have struggled with anxiety in campus environments. I use the women's restroom because I am a woman, but also because my greatest fear is running into one of the people who attacked me during the most vulnerable part of my day. This is not rare, many transgender women I know started using the women's restroom and changing rooms because they began experiencing sexual harassment.

What those men did to me does not define me. The sexual assault and harassment that cisgender and transgender youth experience every day means nothing about who we are. It's a reflection of the world we live in.

Please don't support a world where I have to use the restroom in a parking garage instead of the one I sit next to while studying. A world where my girlfriend's transgender co-workers need to leave the building they work in just to relieve themselves. A world where students at my old high school have to cross a busy intersection just to pee.

If you vote for HB 183, these horrific experiences become a reflection of *you*. Because you will be something just as bad as a bully: A bystander.

Instead of addressing the men who attack women, and policing their actions, school administrators and lawmakers minimize women's experiences and look for scapegoats who can't fight back.

Please vote no on HB 183.