

Hello, my name is Ari B. I recently graduated with a Master of Science from OSU. I am not a lawyer. I am not a doctor. But I can share a glimpse of how a bill such as HB 183 may affect people in their everyday lives.

I came out as a trans woman during my grad school career. I told my department, and they all supported me by calling me by my new name and pronouns. But when it came to the restrooms, even though I belong in the women's room, I feared the public climate around trans issues could spark a negative reaction and put me in danger.

So, to avoid any possible backlash by people who invalidated my identity, I decided to only use the gender neutral single-stall restrooms. The problem? The closest one was three buildings away. And in an ironic twist, I was taking medication with a side effect of being a diuretic. I made that trip several times a day, taking a noticeable amount of time away from my research and schoolwork.

A similar experience occurred with the locker rooms at the gym on campus. I had to purchase a locker in the gender-neutral area. Since they were reserved for faculty, they were much bigger than I needed, and more expensive too. I had to pay triple the cost of a locker in the women's area just to be able to exercise like everyone else.

All these little things added up and served to tell me I wasn't welcome. Having to take that much time out of my workday to use the restrooms and needing to pay a bigger portion of my already small student stipend to exercise created differences between my peers and I that disadvantaged me. Graduate school is difficult enough already without these unnecessary stressors.

Eventually I grew tired of having to go out of my way every time I needed to use the restroom, until one day I decided to just use the restroom in the department that aligned with my gender identity. And absolutely nothing came of it. Nobody made any comments or faces at me, we all just went about our business and carried on. My existence in that space was not a threat to my peers. A bill like HB 183 would change that, creating a vigilante system that would actively make those spaces hostile to me while purporting to protect my non-transgender peers from a threat that did not exist.

A bill like HB 183 would only serve to place undue burden on trans individuals who simply wish to live their lives just like anybody else. The exclusive use of gender-neutral facilities, proposed by some legislators as the solution, is not a viable alternative for any trans individual. It would further contribute to stigma against us, which would not only put us in physical danger but also be detrimental to our mental health, as study after study has shown that social acceptance is an essential part of the treatment of gender dysphoria.

I urge you to vote "No" on HB 183 and stop the continued stigma against trans individuals, so that we may live safer, happier lives. Thank you for your time.