

My name is Zac and I am a transgender man who has lived his entire life in Northeast Ohio.

Access to bathrooms consistent with one's gender is of the utmost importance. I can guarantee you've already shared a bathroom with a transgender person and were none the wiser. You've likely also shared a bathroom with someone you assumed to be transgender but wasn't.

Before I ever knew what the word "transgender" meant or even knew that transgender people existed -- my entire school career -- I used the girls' bathrooms as this piece of legislation would have me do. The girls did not want me there. They knew I didn't belong there as much as I did, long before I ever transitioned. This was a consistent occurrence throughout my life pre-transition, and its consequences ranged from mere dirty looks to mothers pulling their young daughters sharply away from me to being yelled at -- all for doing what you're trying to force people to do. This sort of legislation will make them feel as unsafe as I do. It protects no one.

Post-transition, I use the men's bathroom as I should. No one has any issues with this -- because it's not an issue. That's the reality. For years, I have volunteered with a local nonprofit whose work sometimes necessitates getting dressed onsite at events. I have been with them since before I transitioned. When I came out several years into volunteering with them, I switched to using the bathroom with the other men with some hesitation. The hesitation was unnecessary on my part, as none of them had any problems with me being in there -- and we have members all across the spectrums of race, religion, gender, and political ideology. It's never been a problem because transgender people in bathrooms aren't a problem -- we just need to pee.

I understand the desire to protect people, but this legislation does not accomplish that. All it does is make the most vulnerable of us even more unsafe. I strongly urge you to vote no on HB 183.