

Opponent Testimony for Higher Education Committee on HB 183

Wednesday, October 11, 2023

Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the Ohio House Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opposition to House Bill 183, the so-called “trans bathroom bill.” I am a resident of Cleveland, I identify as both queer and genderqueer, and I am a longtime queer community organizer.

This committee and our Statehouse has witnessed many versions of this bill already, as well as other measures that truncate the ability of trans Ohioans to participate freely in their lives. Members of this committee and other Representatives have repeatedly questioned the bodies, lives, and motivations of trans Ohioans who have testified in protest.

If your best understanding of trans identity comes from Tucker Carlson or Fox News, I hope you will genuinely listen and attend to the voices of those who come before you today. It is trans Ohioans—not you, and not Tucker—who will bear the burden of the hate, misunderstanding, misinformation, fearmongering, and scapegoating that is occurring here today.

Whether intentional or not, support for this bill takes direct aim at some of Ohio’s most vulnerable young people, and tells them that they are separate and unequal.

Because I am dedicated to the safety and wellbeing of my queer community, I am also someone who has spent a lot of time standing around in front of Nazis in the past two years. The rise in vitriol (like Tucker Carlson, and like some of the questions and comments generated by House members hearing past iterations of anti-trans laws) has directly fed the energy of Nazis, neo-Nazis, white supremacists, Proud Boys, and others who believe that Christian white straightness is godly and all other identities are satanic.

If you vote in support of this bill, which declares that trans Ohioans should not have the same access to physically necessary facilities that all other Ohioans have access to, then you too will be one of the many voices telling those Nazis that they are right, that extermination is appropriate, that violence is appropriate, that hate is appropriate.

I don’t believe any of you intend to hate any of Ohio’s youth, but the facts are that you will personally make their lives immeasurably worse if you support this bill. And you will increase the likelihood of violence in their communities and their lives, by empowering the Nazis who already bring guns, threats, ballistics, weaponry, chanting, signs, flags, and hate to our communities.

I beg you to vote no.

Thank you,

Elaine Schleiffer