

October 11, 2023

Honorable Chair Rep Young, Ranking Member Miller, and esteemed committee members of the Committee for Higher Education,

My name is Kara Butlien-Cohen and I am a high school science teacher who works in Dayton. What makes me unique is that I am a transgender female. I am a woman, I am human, I am me. I raise my voice not only for myself, but to those who may not be heard: the students. For these people, I voice opposition to OH HB 183.

As an educator, it is my job to not ONLY teach content, but to ensure that there is a safe learning environment for all students. Yes, this includes using the bathroom. Transgender and nonbinary students already struggle about which bathroom to use or are forced into the awkward position of having to go to a nurse's bathroom. Using the restroom should not be anxiety inducing. Why should a select few individuals dictate what bathroom you should use? This bill invokes monitoring bathrooms in the name of safety. This does not work at all because it is not enforceable at all or creates situations that further confuse and allow for anxiety.

My students' voices speak with my inner child. Rae speaks to us. "Being a gender fluid teen in 2023 is complicated. I still see myself using the women's restroom because I am still "technically (biologically)" a woman so I will still use the women's restroom. But being gender fluid it's really hard for me to understand when I feel like a they or a male. What restroom do I use? But say you are nonbinary. I believe you should have a women's/men's bathroom they can use so they don't have to use a men's restroom and they don't have to use a women's restroom. But say you are trans and you are a trans male you can use a male's restroom. If you are a trans female you can use the female bathroom. Using the bathroom is a basic right,".

Alexis raises her voice now, "I am a genderfluid teenager and when I use the bathroom I use the women's restroom. I believe that if you are trans you should be able to use the right restroom like say you're a trans woman you should be able to use the women's restroom. Also if you're a trans male you should be able to use the male restroom. Places should also have a mens/womens restroom for non-binary people. If trans and non-binary people don't get to use the right bathroom it messes with their head and it can make their mental health worse. If their mental health gets worse they might hurt themselves or worse,"

One of the parts of the bill that is NOT discussed is the intended consequences of this bill. All of the discussion centers on transgender and nonbinary children, as we should fight for children, but we should also recognize transgender and nonbinary adults who are impacted. I pose a query for you. Suppose you are transgender or nonbinary and you are attending an event at school and there are no gender neutral bathrooms. What do you do? Do you avoid the bathroom or go to the

bathroom of the gender you identify with? Your mind races and your anxiety increases and confusion.

What Rae and Alexis say is true. When I have to use a bathroom at a different school or when there are no gender neutral bathrooms, I have the same fears and anxieties. These fears start small. Slowly, they grow. As it grows, it leads my inner child and my adult self scream at a growing black monstrous cloud. It invalidates me, toys with me. A few times I have almost given in.

I close my testimony with this idea. What this bill does is a form of invalidation, degradation and cowardice. According to the poem "The Hangman,"

"You tricked me, Hangman!" I shouted then. "That your scaffold was built for other men. And I no henchman of yours," I cried, "You lied to me, Hangman, foully lied!"
Then a twinkle grew in his buckshot eye: "Lied to you? Tricked you?" he said, "Not I. For I answered straight and I told you true: The scaffold was raised for none but you.
"For who has served me more faithfully than you with your coward's hope?" said he, "And where are the others that might have stood side by your side in the common good?"
"Dead," I whispered; and amiably "Murdered," the Hangman corrected me; "First the alien, then the Jew... I did no more than you let me do."

Think on that...

I urge a no vote on HB 183