

Ohio House State and Higher Education Committee

HB 183

Opponent Testimony

Daphne Carr, Youngstown resident

October 11, 2023

Written-Only Testimony

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Miller and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today against House Bill 183. My name is Daphne Carr and I am a successful writer who lives in Youngstown. I am here today to share with you about how this legislation will negatively impact the communities and businesses of Youngstown and cities and towns like it across the state. As a returning Ohioan who moved back to the state because I believe it was a more welcoming place, I ask you to vote no on HB 183.

I graduated from Youngstown-area public schools 20 years ago and wanted to stay in the area, but felt that I had to leave Ohio when I graduated because of the legal barriers to workplace and civic life for LGBTQIA+ residents at that time. I enjoyed a successful professional career as a writer in New York City and returned to Youngstown recently because I believed that Ohio had become a more welcoming and open place for protected minorities, including transgender people. I am not alone: there are many people who grew up during the bad old days and who have seen Ohio become more welcoming and decided to move back to our hometowns. In doing so, we bring expertise and useful experiences and we create good jobs in towns and cities that desperately need them. I am one of those people, and it is from that standpoint that I fear for the future of Ohio if this ban passes.

HB183 is a proposed ban that creates a hostile educational environment and makes life impossible for Ohio students of all genders. By creating a discriminatory practice around who can use public bathroom facilities, it would effectively cause all people in public schools to become gender police where anyone can decide at any time to challenge a student's right to use a bathroom. This environment will foster hostility, distrust, panic, and create conditions for bullying, harassment, and violence.

HB183 threatens Ohio's social and economic future, because it threatens our ability to provide safety and equality in educational institutions, which are the hallmark of our quality of life in Ohio. Turning our schools into segregated institutions with license to police and punish students based on perceived gender norms will deeply harm all students, teachers, and staff of schools. It will give license to create vigilantes and bullies out of parents, teachers, school administrators, and other students. It will thus create high levels of paranoia, panic, bullying, harassment, and violence in our schools. This is a great harm to everyone who participates in the school system, and thus a harm to the whole community. This proposed ban means parents of school age transgender children—and allies of all kinds—will not stay in Ohio. It means workers with families will not come to a

discriminatory state like Ohio, and major corporations and innovative and competitive businesses will not move to Ohio. Furthermore, it means that younger Ohioans will not return to this state – as I did – because they can no longer see it as a safe or welcoming place to live. Instead, Ohio will become a national laughing stock of bigotry and backwardness.

If passed, this proposed ban will have a catastrophic downstream impact on the whole economic and social ecology of our communities. If you pass this ban, we will suffer harassment and violence against K-12 children—people who deserve the utmost care and compassion as they grow. This ban will result in drastically reduced university enrollment that will destroy our top notch and well-respected school systems, and it will result in a huge decrease in corporate relocations.

Also if passed, you know that this ban will be challenged and eventually overturned, as it is a flagrant abuse of civil rights, a clearly unlawful form of sex discrimination. You must know in your hearts that it is horrifically unethical and illegal for a piece of legislation like this to segregate people into separate and unequal spaces, and to bar access to public facilities to protected minorities. If passed, this ban will be lifted - eventually.

But by that time, another generation of people raised in Ohio will leave, and this time they will never come back because of the harassment, stigmas, and physical violence that was your ban perpetrated against them. Their families will never come back. Their businesses will never come back. You will have condemned Ohio to another generation of suffering, broken families, and lost economic opportunities.

I am speaking as a person who lives in and loves Youngstown, and who knows that transgender children and adults in our community deserve the right to use the bathroom of the gender they live with daily. I am asking you to stop chasing people away from Youngstown, and from all of Ohio, with this discrimination. My city cannot afford to chase families away or to chase businesses away, because of discrimination. Youngstown wants to thrive and become a place that people want to move to, raise their families in, and work in. This proposed band shuts down all of those positive visions of the future, and that is why I implore you to vote no on this issue, HB 183.

I thank you for the opportunity to present this opposition testimony and for your respect on my perspective as a successful returning Ohioan who wants a flourishing landscape for cultural and economic growth.