



Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and Members of the House Higher Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to House Bill 183. This bill represents a stain upon the soul of the collective spirit of our state. We are literally debating who can use which restroom and under what conditions. Unfortunately, this is not a new argument in Ohio or the United States. Ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the Supreme Court ushered in a period of “separate but equal” which became an accepted reality. HB183 seeks to do nothing less than institutionalize a new separate, but equal status for transgender, nonbinary, and gender expansive people. You might argue that segregation of people of color is different than our current situation, but they are in fact closely similar. HB183 would attempt to force transgender people to use a bathroom which corresponds not to their lived gender identity, but to the sex which was assigned to them at birth. HB183 and bills like it in other states are nothing more than vehicles for instilling hate and fear in the transgender community.¹

In her sponsor testimony, Representative Lear argues that HB183 protects children, but she fails to address the many adults who will be impacted by the provisions of HB183. Faculty, staff, administrators, undergraduate, graduate, and professional students will all be adversely affected by HB183. They, along with K-12 students, will be told that they must use a restroom which does not correspond to their gender and where they may face increased threats of harassment and assault. While the myth persists, that transgender people access restrooms for the purpose of assaulting cisgender individuals, actual data shows that the opposite is in fact the case.² A 2019 study conducted by the Harvard Chan School of Public Health concluded that more than 36% of transgender youth who were forced to use restricted restrooms—such as the situation which HB183 would create—reported being the victims of sexual assault.³ A similar study in 2018 found that there was no empirical evidence to suggest that transgender people posed a threat to cisgender people in public restrooms.⁴

Representative Lear and others have also invoked “Judeo-Christian values,” as arguments about the supposed necessity of HB183. As a devout Christian, I reject the idea that our faith should compel

¹ See Marcie Bianco, “Statistics Show Exactly How Many Times Trans Have Attacked You in Bathrooms,” *MIC*, 2015, <https://www.mic.com/articles/114066/statistics-show-exactly-how-many-times-trans-people-have-attacked-you-in-bathrooms>.

² In fact, there is evidence to suggest that some high-profile cases alleging assault by transgender individuals in recent years have been intentionally misrepresented in the media. For one example, see Robby Soave, “Conservatives Wrongly Portrayed the Loudoun County Sexual Assault as a Transgender Bathroom Issue,” *Reason*, 2021, <https://reason.com/2021/11/01/conservatives-wrongly-portrayed-the-loudoun-county-sexual-assault-as-a-transgender-bathroom-issue>.

³ Gabriel R. Murchison, Madina Agénor, Sari L. Reisner, and Ryan J. Watson, “School Restroom and Locker Room Restrictions and Sexual Assault Risk Among Transgender Youth,” *Pediatrics*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-2902>.

⁴ Amira Hasenbush, Andrew R. Flores, and Jody L. Herman, “Gender Identity Nondiscrimination Laws in Public Accommodations: a Review of Evidence Regarding Safety and Privacy in Public Restrooms, Locker Rooms, and Changing Rooms,” *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-018-0335-z>.



us to do anything other than love and love even more. Jesus regularly consorted with the outcasts and marginalized people of his culture. If he was physically present with us today, he would be fighting to keep bathroom access inclusive to all people, not imposing laws where transgender people are left to decide between an increased risk of sexual and physical assault or not using the bathroom in their schools and workplaces. The Christian response, the response of any person of faith, must be to reject HB183.

We at LOVEboldly, Christians working for the full inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people in the church and the world, urge you to reject HB183 at the committee level and not allow it to move forward.

Respectfully submitted.

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