

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: 10/09/2023

Name: Joseph Ballas

Are you representing: Yourself Organization

Organization (If Applicable): _____

Position/Title: Medical Student in Ohio

Address: 161 W 10th Ave Apt C

City: Columbus State: OH Zip: 43201

Best Contact Telephone: 937-658-2413 Email: Joeballas25@gmail.com

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB 183

Specific Issue: Bathroom Access in Schools

Are you testifying as a: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Are you testifying: In-Person Written-Only

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? _____

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

I am submitting written testimony in opposition to HB183. (Attached page)

Written Testimony in Opposition HB183

Greetings to the committee. My name is Joseph Ballas and I am a medical student in Ohio. I am writing to you today to encourage you to oppose HB183.

HB183 would limit usage of school restrooms, locker rooms, changing rooms, and shower rooms on the basis of sex assigned at birth. This would directly conflict with Title IX protections for transgender students. Discrimination on the basis of someone's gender identity is inherently discrimination on the basis of sex, as defined by the *Bostock v. Clayton County* Supreme Court decision in 2020.

Many of the proponents of this bill harbor significant animosity towards transgender students and wish to legalize discrimination against them. Whatever its cause, I do not believe that this animosity should be tolerated, so I will not waste time legitimizing the arguments of this cohort. Instead, I would only recommend that they critically reflect on their own understanding of gender, engage with new perspectives, and perhaps seek out counseling or support to help in deconstructing patriarchal worldviews that are not only harmful to the people marginalized by these perspectives, but even to those who chose to perpetuate them. Often times, transphobic sentiments can be rooted in the insecurity that cis-persons may have surrounding the deconstruction of patriarchal gender norms.

However, there are some who argue that while they do not harbor animosity against transgender students, they believe that this bill will prevent cis-males from using inclusive bathrooms as a cover to commit acts of sexual violence against women in women's bathrooms. I want to clarify that this argument is dangerously incorrect. There is absolutely no evidence that inclusive bathrooms increase the incidence of sexual violence in bathrooms. In fact, the opposite is true: evidence suggests that bathroom bans actually put students, particularly transgender youth, at heightened risk of sexual violence.

Bathrooms can be a place of sexual violence and addressing this is important. Experts like Gabriel Murchison, a member of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and lead author of a study that found increased risk of sexual assault for transgender teens dealing with restricted bathroom access, recommend improved supervision of locker rooms, increased separation (curtains, doors, etc.), and effective school responses to reports of harassment. Any bill attempting to actually address these issues should include these or similar solutions.

This bill attempts to put in place a policy that is known to put our students at increased risk of sexual assault and sexual violence. Moreover, this bill normalizes and legitimizes transphobic ideologies that have no place in our legislative bodies, our schools, or our societies. Frankly, in the face of all the systemic challenges related to poverty and health inequity that Ohio faces, it is unclear to me why many members of this legislative body feel that the Statehouse should be spending its time and attention on policing adolescent bathroom usage. In order to protect our students and create a society where people can feel safe in vulnerable spaces, it is essential that the members of this committee vote to oppose HB183.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Joseph Ballas