

Opponent Testimony for HB 183
Ohio House Higher Education Committee
October 11, 2023

Jeanne Ogden, representing Trans Allies of Ohio
<https://transalliesohio.org/>

Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Higher Education Committee, thank you for this opportunity to talk with you today about HB 183.

My name is Jeanne Ogden. I am a member of Trans Allies of Ohio's leadership team and the mom of three daughters, the youngest of whom is trans, in her twenties, and finding her place in the State of Ohio.

Trans Allies of Ohio supports Ohio's transgender, gender non-conforming, and intersex communities and the parents of trans, gender non-conforming, and intersex children by providing safe spaces within the Ohio Statehouse during hearings like these and connecting them with the resources they need to advocate for themselves. We also *listen* to them, learn from them, and understand them to be a diverse group of people—they are not a monolith—with lives, love, experience, knowledge, empathy, and passion to share.

Last week we had the privilege of attending TransOhio's Symposium, held at Baldwin Wallace University near Cleveland. The Symposium was a three-day packed lineup of information on trans healthcare, mental health, family, and the current state of being trans in Ohio.

Trans and non-binary Ohioans, young and old, funneled past our table as they entered the Symposium space. One cautious, self-conscious, gender-non-conforming young person approached our table, picking up on the welcoming, happy, hopeful vibe. Their eyes lit up. They stood a little taller. I told them our mission then pointed to an HB 183 hearing flyer. As the young person directed their eyes downward, their smile faded. Their fingers shook as they reached for the paper. They stepped back from the table, the paper quivering in their hand, and asked us how they were supposed to deal with this. Their voice shook, too, as they wondered aloud if maybe they passed well enough to continue having restroom access in Baldwin Wallace classroom buildings and libraries, many of which had no single-use restrooms. They wondered if it would increase the harassment they were already experiencing. They were concerned, then devastated about the growing realization they may have to drop out, shift all their classes to virtual, or move out of state.

This is what our organization is seeing. Existential dread in the faces of the people we represent.

They recognize the similarities between what is happening to them and what happened to the Jewish community prior to the start of the Holocaust and during the Jim Crow era. They've seen the scene in the movie *Hidden Figures*—and if you haven't watched it, please do—that paints a visceral picture of a human being doing her level best to “follow the rules” and use the bathroom assigned to her at the soul-crushing detriment to her dignity and human spirit.

At the Trans Block Party, hosted by ACLU OHIO, one person urged their friend to “tell the story” of why they should be valued as a human being and given the respect they deserve, the reason Ohioans should find they have value enough to stay here, in this state, in their home.

She didn't want to say. She felt it was silly. But after much cajoling, she said simply, “I donated my kidney.”

After more encouragement, she told the whole story. How she felt it was her duty, her honor, her privilege to donate one of her kidneys to someone she didn't know, an Ohioan who was dying, on the organ transplant list.

This is where our trans loved ones, our trans friends, our trans neighbors, and willing-to-donate-their kidney fellow Ohioans are right now, my friends.

They wonder if that is enough to earn them the right to use the bathroom, not separate, but equal, like everyone else.

We urge you, wholeheartedly, to vote no on HB 183.