



**House Higher Education Committee
HB 183 – Opponent Testimony
October 11, 2023**

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Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the Ohio House Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in opposition to HB 183.

My name is Alison Paxson, and I am a Senior Policy Associate for the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio (CDF-Ohio). For 50 years, the [Children's Defense Fund](#) has championed policies and programs that lift Ohio children out of poverty, protect them from abuse and neglect, and ensure their access to appropriate and targeted health care, quality education, and nutritional wellness. We envision a nation where marginalized children flourish, leaders prioritize their well-being, and communities wield the power to ensure they thrive.

House Bill 183 runs contrary to all aspects of that vision, and as an organization, we strongly urge you to oppose it and give it no further consideration.

Bottom line: restricting transgender student access to shared spaces like bathrooms is not just unnecessary, but discriminatory and dangerous. This bill will not protect children.

Significant data and research contradict the statements and misconceptions asserted before this committee in previous hearings to support this bill and its supposed aim of protecting children. The vague and unspecified accounts of incidents of sexual assault and rape in Ohio presented by the sponsors as evidence for need of this bill remain [unsubstantiated](#) – grounded only in fear. In fact, these claims fly in the face of robust data and research showing that [there is no link between trans-inclusive policies and bathroom safety](#). By preventing transgender children and young people in our K-12 schools and colleges and universities from accessing basic human services and public facilities consistent with their gender identity, this bill will only subject more children to further harm and fail to protect an already marginalized youth demographic.

One prominent [study](#) from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health showed that transgender and gender nonbinary teenagers face increased risk of sexual assault in schools that prohibit them from using bathrooms and other facilities that are not



consistent with their gender identity. In a 2019 survey of nearly 3,700 youth aged 13-17, researchers found that “36% of transgender or gender nonbinary students with restricted bathroom or locker room access reported being sexually assaulted in the last 12 months.” In fact, more than 1 out of 4 transgender students reported being a victim of sexual assault in the past year.

Such data makes clear that exclusionary bathroom policies pose significant and preventable harm to our transgender and nonbinary students.

In fact, bathroom bills are bad policy for all children, no matter how they identify. While research shows the importance of a welcoming school environment and positive school climate and culture on all children, discriminatory legislation like this jeopardizes those environments and can bear a significant toll on the mental health and well-being of all students. This is especially harmful as children and youth across our state continue to grapple with growing mental and behavioral health challenges.

Data from this year’s [Youth Risk Behavior Survey conducted by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#) shows that nearly all indicators of poor mental health and suicidality have increased for adolescents in the United States, especially among LGBTQ+ young people, 20% of whom tragically attempted suicide in the last year. In fact, in [Ohio](#), for instance, nearly 1 in 8 children received a diagnosis of anxiety, depression, or both in 2020, up 42% – the 10th highest increase nationwide.

These students are all our children, no matter how they identify or express their gender identity. They deserve their well-being to be considered and prioritized with equal weight in our society to their peers. We urge you to reject this unnecessary and harmful bill and instead prioritize policies that will truly protect children and ensure them their right to grow up with basic human dignity, joy, and opportunities to live well.