

Proponent Testimony for H.B. 183

Thank you, Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and House Higher Education Committee Members for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of H.B. 183 regarding single-sex bathroom access in schools, universities, and other public spaces.

My name is Judi Phelps and I reside in Vinton County in southeast Ohio. I am a firearms and unarmed self-defense instructor, and owner of On Guard Defense Training Center and Shooting Range. I am also a staunch advocate for protecting the most vulnerable among us – namely women and children – which is ultimately what led to my career choice.

I used to live up here in the city and surrounding suburbs. Twenty years ago, I was abducted at gunpoint in broad daylight, held captive, raped, and finally released from a psychopath. Frankly, there's little that is unique to my story. Why? Because according to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS), about 43.6% of women and 24.8% of men in the U.S. have experienced some form of sexual violence in their lifetime. Those figures should shock all of us into reality, especially given the fact that rape and other sexual violence often go unreported, thus are underreported. To put those numbers into further perspective, every 68 seconds an American is sexually assaulted.

The story gets even worse for our children. According to RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network), young people are at highest risk for becoming victims of sexual violence, with ages 12-34 at the highest risk for rape and sexual assault. RAINN goes on to report that 82% of all juvenile victims are female; 90% of adult rape victims are female.

It is the duty of all Americans, and specifically our legislature, to enact laws that protect our most vulnerable citizens. At minimum, women and children should have confidence that they can enter a restroom, changing room, locker room, or other facility where they are in partial or full undress and trust that they are safe from peeping Toms or rapists.

What is wrong with our society when we indulge the mental illness or ill intent of men, whether claiming to be a woman or not, to have free and legal access to prey on vulnerable women and children? There have already been multiple cases where this has happened and too few are taking a stand against it. I am thankful that Representatives Lear and Bird have the courage to do so by introducing this bill.

I ask that every Ohioan takes a stand for what is right, what is moral, and what is just, by protecting women and children from dangerous predators.

Thank you for your time. I'll be glad to answer any questions you have for me.

Judi Phelps
66211 Bethel Road
New Plymouth, Ohio 45654
740-596-1984
judi.phelps@onguarddefense.com