



For Young LGBTQ Lives

May 8, 2023

## **RE: Opposition to HB 8, Enact the Parents' Bill of Rights**

Members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

My name is Gabby Doyle and I am an Advocacy Campaign Manager at The Trevor Project. I grew up in Dayton, and currently reside here in Columbus. I'm writing in opposition to HB8 due to the harm the outlined measures will undoubtedly have on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth in Ohio. This new policy would stigmatize essential instruction related to sexual orientation and gender identity, and force educators to disclose a student's transgender identity to their parents or guardians without the student's consent. Schools play a critical role in creating positive and affirming environments for LGBTQ youth, and it's essential that young people receive instruction that represents a diverse range of identities, and attend schools where they feel safe and affirmed.

The Trevor Project is the world's leading suicide prevention and mental health organization for LGBTQ young people. We offer a suite of 24/7 crisis intervention and suicide prevention programs, including TrevorLifeline, TrevorText, and TrevorChat as well as the world's largest safe space social networking site for LGBTQ youth, TrevorSpace.

LGBTQ youth are not inherently prone to suicide risk because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Rather, they are placed at higher risk by the mistreatment and stigmatization they experience in society. According to The Trevor Project's [2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health](#), 45% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, including more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth. However, LGBTQ youth who had access to spaces that affirmed their sexual orientation and gender identity – including schools – reported lower rates of attempting suicide than those who did not.

If enacted, this policy would undoubtedly increase suicidality among LGBTQ students in Ohio. According to [The Trevor Project's 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health](#), 46% of LGBTQ youth in Ohio seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, including 54% transgender and nonbinary youth in Ohio. Further, only 37% of students found home or school as LGBTQ affirming spaces. If this bill is enacted, LGBTQ young people will be able to access even less affirming schools.

Rather than advance parental rights, this bill aims to censor inclusive and affirming school curriculum and policies and actively harms LGBTQ youth. It's essential that all youth receive

an education that encourages curiosity and critical thinking through a broad range of school subjects. This bill sets a dangerous precedent that allows politicians to censor school curriculum they don't like, and undermines the diverse perspectives of parents in a school's community.

A key component of a young LGBTQ person's wellbeing is having the support and acceptance of the adults in their life. In a [2019 study by The Trevor Project](#), LGBTQ youth who report having at least one accepting adult were 40% less likely to report a suicide attempt in the past year. If an LGBTQ young person isn't accepted at home, they often seek support at school. This bill means that students would need to choose to be outed to their parents in order to use their name or the right restroom, or to stay in the closet at school.

Transgender and nonbinary youth [attempt suicide less](#) when their pronouns are respected, when they are allowed to officially change the gender marker on their legal documents, and when they have access to spaces (online, at school, and home) that affirm their gender identity. Further, transgender and nonbinary youth who reported having pronouns respected by all or most people in their lives attempted suicide at [half the rate](#) of those who did not have their pronouns respected.

Further, LGBTQ youth in schools with an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, and by extension, school policies, were [more likely to report](#) that their peers were somewhat or very accepting of LGBTQ people and less likely to experience harassment or feeling unsafe. Inclusive school environments for LGBTQ youth also play an [important role](#) in their academic achievement, which can impact the trajectory of their continuing education and career.

Opposition to inclusive school practices is part of a broader movement to not only oppose LGBTQ-inclusive policies but also to erase conversations of LGBTQ people and identities from schools entirely. It's crucial that we continue to foster inclusive and affirming school environments for LGBTQ youth, and as members of the committee on Primary and Secondary Education, you have the opportunity to model inclusive and affirming behavior by rejecting this cruel, unfounded, and discriminatory bill.

LGBTQ youth should be able to thrive in schools that are supportive and affirming of all students. For these reasons, The Trevor Project urges you to vote against HB8. Should you have any questions or if we can be of assistance regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at [gabby.doyle@thetrevorproject.org](mailto:gabby.doyle@thetrevorproject.org)

Sincerely,

**Gabby Doyle**

Advocacy Campaign Manager

The Trevor Project