

May 8th, 2023

Representative Swearingen, Representative Carruthers, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee:

My name is Nona Landis and I am a resident of the city of Cincinnati, a long-time educator, and a member of the LGBTQ+ community. I am writing to you today to express my firm opposition to House Bill 8.

I am deeply concerned over the harm that this bill stands to inflict upon already marginalized student populations. By framing this bill as an issue of “parental rights,” Ohio's representatives are deliberately overlooking the fact that not all students live in households that would affirm their identities. Not all students can fully and safely be themselves among their families. It is their schools that are the safest spaces for them and that allow them to flourish. By forcing teachers and staff members to share private and personal information, potentially without students’ consent, this bill will instead cause schools to become places of anxiety at best and danger at the worst for LGBTQ+ students.

I have spent about a decade working in education, from the secondary level to higher education. Even when teaching at a university, my students would frequently tell me that I was one of their only instructors to bring up issues of identity in my classes. That I was one of the only instructors they felt truly comfortable being “out” to. This goes to show that, in spite of the social progress we’ve made in the past few decades, many young people still don’t feel comfortable being their true selves in our public, educational spaces—or in their own homes. This ill-conceived bill only serves to further the marginalization and alienation of these students, most of whom are students who need our support the most.

I do not have children of my own, but I firmly believe that it is the responsibility of all adults to champion young people—ALL young people—and to speak out against unjust and inequitable decisions that would do them harm. I ask you, the members of this committee, to consider your own responsibility and whether your support of this bill is in the best interest of the students for whom you claim to advocate.

Sincerely,
Nona Landis, Ph.D.
Cincinnati, OH