

NO TO HOUSE BILL 8!
Testimony by Campaign for Our Shared Future

Chair Bird, Vice-Chair Fowler-Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee:

The Campaign for our Shared Future (COSF) is committed to fighting for the right of every child to an inclusive and high-quality education that prepares them for success in life. Unfortunately, House Bill (HB) 8 undermines this goal and would help dismantle public schools, which serve as the backbone of this country.

HB 8 is not about protecting children – it’s about banning books. This bill would give a **single person** the power to appoint themselves judge and jury over what’s appropriate for everyone else’s children. Parents already have the power to make choices about their children’s education. In fact, federal law protects their right to review their child’s materials. All they must do is ask.ⁱ

HB 8 could result in more books that reflect ALL of Ohio’s children being pulled from library shelves. Indeed, one in three books censored last year feature LGBTQ+ characters.ⁱⁱ ALL of Ohio’s children deserve to see themselves and their families represented in books.

HB 8 is a needless waste of resources. This proposal could result in every school hunting down words or sentences from tens of thousands of books, which will remove teachers, librarians, and administrators from their primary responsibility to educate children. This bill is burdensome and would undermine continued efforts by the legislature to tackle the teacher shortage crisis.ⁱⁱⁱ

HB 8 is redundant and unnecessary. Federal law already guarantees parents a right to access their child’s education records,^{iv} and allows them to review any surveys before they are administered to their child, among other rights.^v Provisions concerning student records are a thinly veiled attempts to “out” LGBTQ+ students to their parents without their consent. HB 8 could create barriers for students who need mental health services but may not have supportive or involved parents.

HB8 is a distraction from the real issues facing Ohio's students: staff shortages, substandard school facilities, insufficient school funding, and more.^{vi} Say NO to HB 8 because all Ohio students deserve access a robust, high-quality education.

Sincerely,

Heather Harding

Executive Director of the Campaign for Our Shared Future

ⁱ Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA), United States Department of Education, November 2020, https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource_document/file/20-0379.PPRA_508_0.pdf

ⁱⁱ Banned in the USA: Rising School Book Bans Threaten Free Expression and Students' First Amendment Rights, Pen America, April 2022, <https://pen.org/banned-in-the-usa/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Susan Tebben, "Governor Signs Bill With Aims to Help Teacher Shortage in Ohio," *Ohio Capital Journal*, January 2023, <https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2023/01/06/governor-signs-bill-with-aims-to-help-teacher-shortage-in-ohio/>

^{iv} Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act, <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/faq/what-ferpa#:~:text=The%20Family%20Educational%20Rights%20and,identifiable%20information%20from%20the%20education>

^v Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA).

^{vi} "Our View: Contract Didn't Fix Columbus Schools. Mice, Roaches, Dated Classes Among Concerns" *The Columbus Dispatch*, August 2022, <https://www.dispatch.com/story/opinion/editorials/2022/08/30/editorial-what-the-issues-with-columbus-city-schools-ohio-teachers-strike-tax-levy-teachers/65461777007/>