

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: _____

Name: _____

Are you representing: Yourself Organization

Organization (If Applicable): _____

Position/Title: _____

Address: _____

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Best Contact Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): _____

Specific Issue: _____

Are you testifying as a: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? _____

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.



Toledo City School District Board of Education
Sheena Barnes, President

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House Primary and Secondary Education Committee

House Bill 8 Opponent Testimony

May 9, 2023

Chairman Bird, Vice Chairwoman Fowler-Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, I urge you to focus your efforts on addressing real issues that are affecting public education in Ohio and stop targeting our LGBTQ+ students.

My name is Sheena Barnes and as an elected Board Member for the Toledo City School District, I have a responsibility to protect all TPS students from legislation which could endanger their lives and result in harmful psychological and/or physical abuse. That is why I strongly oppose House Bill 8.

House Bill 8, known as the “Parents’ Bill of Rights,” attempts to solve a problem that does not exist. Ohio law already requires school districts to provide parents and guardians the right to review the selection of textbooks, reading lists, instructional materials, and academic curriculum used by the district.

Understanding that community participation in the schools is essential to promote and maintain the quality of education for all students, Toledo Public Schools, like most other public school districts, has adopted policies to encourage all citizens to express their ideas and concerns related to curriculum and instructional materials. House Bill 8 does not provide parents or guardians with any rights they do not already possess.

Instead, House Bill 8 serves as a direct attack on LGBTQ+ students and creates barriers for students seeking mental health supports. Requiring school districts to report “changes to a student’s mental, emotional, or physical health or well-being” would require educators to breach a student’s privacy and out LGBTQ+ students to their families.

Toledo Public Schools considers parents an important resource in providing its students the best educational outcome possible. Unfortunately, it may not always be safe to discuss a student’s sexual orientation or gender identity with a parent or guardian. In fact, the National Association of School Psychologists Principles for Professional Ethics provides that educators must respect the

right of privacy of their students with regards to their sexual orientation and gender identity, and school psychologists should not share that information with anyone without the student's permission.

This legislation would also serve as a barrier to mental health services and endanger the lives of our LGBTQ+ students. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among our youth, and LGBTQ+ students are at a significantly increased risk of committing suicide or having suicidal thoughts. In 2022, 45% of LGBTQ+ youth seriously considered attempting suicide, including more than half of transgender youth. While over 80% of LGBTQ+ youth want mental healthcare, 60% are not able to get it. Concerns regarding the need to obtain parent permission or the fear of being outed are significant causes of LGBTQ+ youth being unable to receive proper care. House Bill 8 perpetrates this fear and harms Ohio's children.

Rather than attacking LGBTQ+ students, this committee should focus on policy that makes all students feel supported. LGBTQ+ youth who found their school to be affirming or who live in communities that are accepting of LGBTQ+ people reported lower rates of attempted suicide. Policy that protects the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of Ohio students must always take priority over individual members own political ambitions.

Thank you Chairman Bird and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee for the opportunity to share with you how House Bill 8 is an extreme piece of legislation that, if passed, would intensify fear and lead to worse health and education outcomes for LGBTQ+ students.

/s/ Sheena Barnes

President, Toledo City School District Board of Education