

Ohio House Committee on Primary and Secondary Education

May 9, 2023

TESTIMONY ON HB 8

Jeanne Ogden, Dublin, Ohio

I'm Jeanne Ogden. I was born and raised in Ohio. I oppose HB 8.

I have a trans daughter who came out to me in high school. I did not support her as well as I could have because of rampant disinformation on the internet that told me she would mutilate herself for nothing and harm herself later in life. At 18, she approached us again. Her dad and I advised her to wait until she was older. She didn't push back.

As an adult, she embarked on a gender-affirming care plan. She is happier, more successful and more confident. During those intervening years, she suffered, but that is her story to tell.

In my story, I wish I could go back in time.

Recently, I asked her why she hadn't pushed harder.

She told me she was afraid our family would fall apart. I told her she was wrong. That we would have figured it out, but the next day, I realized I had gaslit her. I had undercut her dead-on intuition, because after she approached us at 18, after seven years clean, I relapsed. My husband struggled to cope. We barely kept it together.

We've healed as a family with help from therapists, time, and admitting we were wrong. I love and support my daughter now, and she loves me. We are the lucky ones.

If kids aren't telling their parents they have gender dysphoria, there is a reason, and forcing that conversation can destroy families who are not equipped to deal with it. It can set grandparents against grandchildren. Force divorces and legal battles. Cause financial problems. For the child, there are risks, too. Counselors are trained to help facilitate conversations with families, but it can take time. It's never "Just tell them how you feel. We will deal with the aftermath later." Therapists prepare their clients for that aftermath. A child who has experienced trauma, or has no self-esteem, or is bullied needs tools to deal with whatever reaction they get, a safety plan if things go south.

Parents are human. *Families* need help.

If you think religion shouldn't factor into that conversation and timing, you are avoiding some hard truths. Let's keep it real.

We just heard the "Demon Guy" at the last House Bill 68 hearing say he believed demons inhabit the bodies of trans people and trans advocates.

Jill Woolbright, former member of the Fagler County School Board in Florida, believed she was engaged in Satanic warfare.¹

A child whose parent believes that has a reasonable fear for their emotional, psychological, and spiritual safety.

If you take that same child, who believes they can't talk to their parents and *hides* their dysphoria at school for fear the school will *tell* their parents, that child is locked down inside a pressure cooker.

That is a tragedy for the child.

That is also in direct opposition to the **Safety and Violence Education for Students Act** our legislature passed in 2020, which was passed to prevent violence by, in part, helping kids struggling with depression, bullying, and suicidal ideation before they do something dangerous.

How are you going to help kids if they don't come to you?

I'll say it again. Counselors are trained to facilitate these conversations. By cutting them out of the decision-making process, you create a foreseeable liability for every school in this state.

Let the counselors do their jobs. That's why you hire them.

I will finish by saying that trans kids do exist.

Trans kids deserve care—not conversion therapy.

Trans kids' fears are *justified*.

Trans kids are not broken. They are beautiful.

The world agrees.

Gen Z and the generations that come after are breaking free of their gender binary chains. That scares many of you, but they will be freer, more accepting, and more authentic than you or I will ever be.

I envy them.

You should, too.

[1https://www.newsdaytonabeach.com/stories/fellow-school-board-members-respond-to-woolbrights-spiritual-warfare-comments,12703](https://www.newsdaytonabeach.com/stories/fellow-school-board-members-respond-to-woolbrights-spiritual-warfare-comments,12703)