

Opponent Testimony for HB8

Senate Education Committee

December 12, 2023

Cody Clark

Esteemed members of the Ohio education committee,

My name is Cody and I am a 20 year old disabled dancer and student and I am here to testify in opposition to HB8, which has been called by many as a forced outing bill, as well as Ohio's "don't say gay bill."

This is my second time in Columbus this week testifying against anti-trans legislation, and it's taxing. I need to be respectful and respectable, angry but not too angry, passionate but not emotional. It's exhausting, and I feel like I'm fighting for my life up here. I hope it gets through to you.

If you're familiar with this bill, you'll know that it's a two in one punch. It has the potential to ban any age-appropriate queer literature *and* take away the trust that students have with their teachers and counselors by forced outing. When I talked to the government oversight committee last week, I talked about how hard it was to be trans in my supposedly good and accepting catholic highschool. But I didn't talk about the two teachers that made it all worthwhile. My freshman English teacher and my junior forensic science teacher were the reason I made it through, and it's because I could talk about being queer in school, in private. I

can't even imagine going through school with this bill in place. I would have had nobody. I have a seven year old brother, and I can't even imagine what it would be like for him to navigate school without these support systems. I've heard so much rhetoric about children being confused by the fact that trans people simply exist, but no talk about how confusing it is to walk the world not knowing what feels different about you. Imagine with any other topic: a child is experiencing something that there is no accessible information for, that is stigmatized, that you can't even talk about. It makes them feel wrong and it shuts them down. You wouldn't do this for health concerns, bodily differences, or developmental stages, so why are you doing it here?

If you are thinking about pushing this bill, I want to ask you: what are you afraid of? What problem are you trying to solve? Trans inevitability? Trans youth? Trans futures? Because I'll tell you what trans kids all over the state are afraid of. Being outed to family members and kicked out because of it. Feeling like the only person in the world with gender dysphoria. Feeling different and not knowing why because they can't find any literature on who they might be. Living a lie. Have you ever had to deal with these fears? I have, and it's debilitating. Why would you put someone through that?

I want to end this by asking you, in your ideal world, how long will you be in office? How long will your political career last? Because each year that another young person affected by this bill turns 18 and heads to the ballot box, they'll learn your name. they'll know who you are. And They'll learn what you did to them by passing this bill.

Thank you for your time.