

**Opponent Testimony for HB8
Senate Education Committee
December 11, 2023**

F. Smith

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Education Committee:

I am the mother of 2 children living in Richland County, Ohio. I teach at a local school and my husband works in manufacturing. Our family takes swim lessons at the local YMCA. I recently joined a local committee to improve the city. Each day, we contribute to our beloved community. As a teacher and a parent, I implore you to not pass HB 8.

Every day at the elementary school where I teach, I see teachers and staff take complicated matters and explain them in an age-appropriate manner. Whether the question is "how do plants grow?" or "why doesn't that classmate have a mom," teachers use their experience and judgement to kindly help students understand the world around them.

Our children go to school to learn about and prepare for the world. There are people in same-sex relationships in the world. To pretend otherwise is foolish. We have students who come from all different family backgrounds. Some children are being raised by grandparents because their parents are no longer living. Some students go to two different homes because their parents are divorced. And some students have parents who are in a same-sex relationship. Teachers should be allowed to welcome students from all backgrounds and not treat their families, and therefore the children themselves, as less than their peers.

Schools are capable of handling questions about same-sex relationships and LGBTQ topics sensitively and in an age-appropriate manner without this legislation. Please vote no on HB 8.