

**Opponent Testimony for HB 8**  
**Senate Education Committee**  
**Tuesday Dec 12, 2023**  
**Felix Prewitt, Student**

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Felix Prewitt, and I am a 16 year old high school junior in Grove City, Ohio. As a student, I well understand the importance of student safety and comfort in the school environment. A student deprived of safety is a student unable to learn. Therefore, I am writing today to oppose House Bill 8 as I know it would foster an unsafe learning environment for countless students.

I know I am not alone in noticing the trauma the current mental health epidemic has caused our youth. So many children are afraid to communicate what they need and want, and fear they will not be able to succeed in life. So many children are at risk of severe mental health disorders, with suicide being the second leading cause of death in youth. I have had the pleasure of knowing many wonderful young people, but also know the unmatched pain of losing them to suicide. One youth suicide is too many, and we need to stop at nothing to curb this epidemic. Despite that, this bill would only exacerbate the pain inflicted on our youth. In the effort for "parental rights", we have lost track of what is best for children.

How many abusive parents will find another "reason" to abuse their child through this law? How many children will bottle up every issue they face, as they no longer have an adult to talk to? How many will see no option other than suicide? Students have the right to privacy, especially if they know telling their parents what they are facing will result in harm. For far too many youth, abusive parents finding out about a mental health disorder or their identity leads to them being homeless or dead. 28% of LGBTQ+ youth have experienced homelessness already. Is this what our children need? It is of the utmost importance that our schools are a place where youth are guaranteed safety and supportive adults to talk to.

I also fail to understand the vague definition of "sexuality content" under this bill. Are children barred from talking about their parents, as they are in a relationship? What is "age appropriate"? Are children to grow up believing storks deliver babies because telling them the truth is uncomfortable? I fail to see anything inappropriate about the limited sexual education provided in our schools. Even in my 10th grade health class, not once was sexual activity mentioned. These guidelines are at best useless, and at worst dismantle First Amendment rights for students and faculty.

Unless the goal of the legislature is to harm our youth irreparably, there is no reason this bill should exist. It defies facts to push a “culture war” narrative and would kill far too many children. Children deserve the fundamental rights to receive a proper education and live long enough to grow up. I urge you to consider my testimony and the dire needs of our children. Please vote no on this deplorable bill and protect our future. This bill helps no one. Thank you for your consideration.

### Works Cited

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