



Columbus Board of Education

Columbus City Schools
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Mission: Each student is highly educated, prepared for leadership and service, and empowered for success as a citizen in a global community.

Ohio Senate Education Committee House Bill 8

Jennifer Adair, Columbus Board of Education President
Dr. Tina Pierce, Columbus Board of Education Member
Judge Eric Brown, Columbus Board of Education Member
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Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brian, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, we are elected board members for Columbus City Schools, the largest school district in the state serving over 45,000 students and employing over 9,000 teachers and staff.

Today, we join fellow school and community leaders to oppose House Bill 8, a bill that, if passed, will harm LGBTQ+ students. **We urge you to vote no on this legislation and allow local districts to develop policies that ensure all students are provided with a safe, supportive, and equitable educational environment.**

In an attempt to censor a portion of the population from curricular content, HB 8 proposes a solution to a problem that doesn't exist. Under Ohio law, the board of education of each school district is required to provide an opportunity for parents to review the selection of textbooks, reading lists, instructional materials, and the academic curriculum used by the schools in the district (R.C. 3313.212). The Columbus Board of Education recognizes that criticism of instructional resources is expected from time to time and has a clear board policy for how parents can work with their teacher and principal to appropriately resolve the issue, including arranging for the child to read an alternative book or use a different instructional resource that meets a similar instructional purpose. The board's policy also includes a process for individual students or parents/guardians or groups of students or parents/guardians to request a re-evaluation of any book or other instructional resource.

Given the state laws and board policies that already exist, it is unnecessary to legislate in the area specific to what the bill calls "sexuality content." It is also unrealistic to ask school districts to provide students with an alternative class while our state is experiencing an unprecedented teacher shortage. Our board's policy allowing a student to read an alternative book or use a different instructional resource at the request of a parent is much more practical and is less likely to alienate a student from their classmates.

While HB 8 does not solve any real issue facing schools, it does appear to promote discrimination against LGBTQ+ youth. The provisions of this bill create barriers for students seeking mental health support and force education professionals to break trust and breach

The Columbus City School District does not discriminate based upon sex, race, color, national origin, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, ancestry familial status or military status with regard to admission, access, treatment or employment. This policy is applicable in all district programs and activities.

privacy for students. The specificity at which this bill discriminates against transgender and gender variant students is especially appalling. A 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health by State showed that in Ohio, 46 percent of LGBTQ+ youth seriously considered suicide in the past year, including 54 percent of transgender and nonbinary youth (Trevor Project). This issue is significant enough to have its own standard under the National Association of School Psychologists Professional Standards. Under this standard, school psychologists do not share information about the sexual orientation, gender identity, or transgender status of a student without the individual's permission. This standard exists to save lives. Public schools are responsible for creating places of belonging for students so they can learn and thrive; education professionals should not be forced to engage in any activity that could lead to the loss of a student's life.

Columbus City Schools is committed to ensuring that all students, including transgender and gender variant students, are provided a safe, supportive, and equitable educational environment that is free from discrimination and harassment based on a student's actual or perceived sex, gender identity, gender expression, and nonconformity to gender stereotypes. It is the policy of the Board of Education to maintain an education and work environment that is free from all forms of discrimination and harassment.

The proponents of HB 8 would like you to believe that relationships between parents and public schools are strained and that schools are hiding information from parents—this narrative is simply not true. The professionals working in Columbus City Schools are fully dedicated to collaborating with families to serve the whole child. **We ask that you find the courage to resist the false narratives that underlie this bill and vote no on HB 8.**

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

Respectfully,

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