



Pro-Choice Ohio

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for accepting my written testimony in opposition to House Bill 8 today. My name is Jaime Miracle. I am the Deputy Director for Pro-Choice Ohio, a statewide organization that advocates for abortion rights and reproductive freedom for all Ohioans. I am submitting this testimony today on behalf of our staff, volunteers, and supporters across the state, to ensure that Ohio's educational system is best set up to support and educate our young people. Education is the cornerstone of our democracy and our nation's success, HB 8 undermines Ohio's educational system and puts our students and teachers at risk.

In the simplest of terms H.B. 8 is about censorship and sets a dangerous precedent for government overreach into what our schools and teachers can and cannot talk about in the classroom. Under the false flag of "parental rights" this bill will harm students and target teachers for punishment for something as small as a family picture on their desk, or answering a question posed by a student.

H.B. 8's definition of "sexuality content" is broad and undefined – what does the legislature mean by words like "sexual concepts" or "gender ideology"? Does it mean that a student asking in class why Mary's family has two moms where their family has a mom and dad? What about a student asking why there aren't as many male teachers as female teachers? What about that teacher's family picture on their desk, what if that teacher's family looks different than the student's? Can they even still have the picture on their desk?

When I was in the first grade at a central Ohio Catholic school, I remember our priest coming in and talking to us about how, after our first communion next year, boys would be able to be altar boys and help during church services. Even at six years old it seemed unequal to me that boys were able to do this, but girls were not. I went up to the priest when he was done presenting to our class and asked, "but why can't girls help with the church service?" Would that question fall under the definition of "gender ideology" and put that priest under the microscope created by this dangerous bill?

I have many friends who are teachers or other school-based workers. The questions that arise in classrooms every day range from the mundane, "Ms. Smith, why do cows moo?" to the highly complex issues surrounding family circumstances, child abuse, sexual violence and so much more. The teachers I know take great pride in the fact that they love and cherish each of the kids they teach. They provide them with warm coats and winter clothing, they buy extra school supplies with their own money each year for the kids who show up without them, they take seriously their solemn responsibility to provide students with the best learning environment possible. Gagging them, risking their jobs and their livelihoods answering a child or teen's question when they come to them at a time of need is not the answer. It will create a

culture of fear and retribution instead of the culture of love, support, and knowledge that Ohio's young people need and deserve.

There are so many ways that this legislature could help to improve our schools and create an environment of compassion, creativity, and learning for every single student across the state. The only environment created by H.B. 8 is one of censorship and fear. H.B. 8 shows that this legislature's focus is not on student success – but instead on scoring political points with their base.

We urge a NO vote on House Bill 8.