

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to House Bill 8. My name is Lizzie Bjork and I am the Education and Advocacy Coordinator at the LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland. I am a resident of Cuyahoga County.

By allowing parents to object to any "sexuality content," HB 8 allows parents to censor educators in cumbersome and confusing ways. Does this bill mean that an educator couldn't mention their partner or spouse in passing? "Sexuality content" -- which was changed from the original "sexually explicit content"-- is a hugely vague term that will allow parents to target any mention of LGBTQIA+ identities in the curriculum. LGBTQ+ people are already stigmatized and under-represented, and censoring them out further perpetuates harmful messages that people's identities are controversial and inappropriate.

Furthermore, this bill's definition of sex does not make sense. Sex assigned at birth does not necessarily correlate to gender, in the case of trans, intersex, and nonbinary people. The Supreme Court has previously interpreted "sex" to refer to gender (in *Bostock v Georgia*, 2020) and neglecting this precedent makes Ohio laws outdated. Defining "sex" as sex assigned at birth is a deliberate and malicious attempt to deny gender diversity.

Additionally, HB 8 puts students in danger by forcing educators to out them to their parents and guardians. As a lesbian, I know how personal and how scary coming out is. Coming out is and needs to be a very personal journey, especially since coming out to their family can put a child's safety and livelihood at risk. Fewer than 1 in 3 trans and nonbinary youth find their homes to be affirming, according to the Trevor Project, and being outed in an unwelcoming home can be hugely damaging to a young person's mental health and even their physical safety. HB 8 will not protect children or improve schools.

Please vote no on House Bill 8.

Thank you for your consideration,
Lizzie Bjork