

HB 8 Testimony  
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Ohio Senate Education Committee  
December 12, 2023  
Submitted to Chair Andrew Brenner  
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Hello, Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, and Ranking Member Ingram. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding HB 8. This is a terrible bill.

Let's dive into it.

Biological sex has been defined by federal courts. Attempting to define it again, here, in state law, in the simplistic terms used in the bill language, will sow more confusion. At another hearing, recently, a witness placed a first year, college level, biology textbook on the podium, dropping it so you could hear the weight of it, and recited the definition for sex found in the textbook. Those of you on the Education Committee know that what students are taught about a subject in first year college biology, will often take on nuance, depth, and potentially contradictory meaning at the end of their education in medical school.

We need you to understand that.

Subjects and topics discussed in schools vary from school to school and classroom to classroom based on the needs of their student population and community. Setting a rigid definition, hard stop, on any discussion of "sexuality content" which includes "any oral or written instruction, presentation, image, or description of sexual concepts or gender ideology" without parental permission is again, a simple definition capable of upending every classroom in this state. How do we teach the terms boy and girl without discussing sexual concepts? How do we talk about culture in our country and others or history or social rights movements? Sexuality content touches almost everything we do. And what is gender ideology? Are we to fire transgender or gay teachers if they place photos of themselves and their partners on their desks? Will we suspend Sally for including her two mom's in her kindergarten "Star of the Day" poster? Does Joey need to leave his gay prom date at home? These topics are nuanced and necessary and our classrooms, Ohio's common-sense, diverse classrooms are the absolute best place to begin exploring them.

We need you to understand that.

We need you to trust our schools to handle these topics with grace and care with input from their local school boards and parents. These bills sow fear in our communities.

I know you've listened to my testimony before, so I won't bore you with another invitation to explore the world of a mom with a transgender child. However, there is something important you need to take away from that testimony and this one.

My child went to a liberal charter school. My child was surrounded by LGBTQ children. The topic was discussed in the halls. She was steeped in tolerance, but when she came out to me as transgender at 15, I said no, we're not doing that – not in so many words – but I stalled for time, I sent her to therapists hoping there was something else causing her gender dysphoria. I am far from proud of it. She suffered during that time and sought care as an adult, and I am grateful she has accepted my apology and welcomed me back into her life.

What does this have to do with HB 8?

Listen closely, because this is the important part.

I didn't march into her school, aghast, demanding they take down their pink, blue, and white flags and rainbow ribbons. I didn't comb through her classes looking to pluck out every last vestige of LGBTQ curriculum nods or tidbits. I didn't enforce my belief system on her school. That is not my parental right.

These parents who are demanding that schools strip their halls and classrooms bare of all signs of LGBTQ people want the state to do the parenting for them, because they don't have the courage or resolve to hold the line on their belief system with their own children. The pressure cooker these parents must be under when Susie comes home with rainbows and a smile on her face, knowing they will have to play the heavy and tell them that's not how things work in their house. No. These parents would prefer not to acknowledge the existence of trans people at all.

I faced that truth. I acknowledged that truth. I said no.

And I will regret that for the rest of my life.

Please, figure out how we are supposed to handle the problems this bill will cause before you advance it out of committee.