

Hello, my name is Cyrus Paris and I am 34 years old. I grew up just outside of Columbus. As a student, I played soccer, was in 'gifted' programs, and frequently volunteered in my community.

20+ years ago, LGBTQIA+ people were nearly unheard of. In school, queer people were not discussed. I don't remember one single mention in a textbook. This lack of representation did not serve my best interests or those of my cisgender, heterosexual classmates, either.

Yet I'd known who I was and what I liked from a very young age. Almost everyone around me knew, too— well, not exactly; they just knew I was different. I remember having my gender questioned by adults. Other parents lectured their children about "people like me" and made rude comments.

Students were cruel and the bullying got physical. All of this in a time when even *I* didn't know the word 'transgender'. At times, I hated myself. I struggled with self-harm and suicidal ideation. At fifteen, I almost succeeded.

It felt inevitable I would die before 18 if I stayed, so I dropped out and left the state. I met other queer and trans people and began the long process of becoming who I am today.

Over the last few years, I've watched in horror as lawmakers in states across the country propose legislation just like this one. My story is not unique; it is the story of what happens when queer and trans youth don't have support.

Research into student mental well-being and academic completion tells us this: LGBTQIA+ students subjected to persistent discrimination and victimization do poorer than their straight, cisgender peers.

One study notes that "youth typically disclose their LGBT identities first to another LGBT person, then to close friends who may or may not be LGBT, then to other peers, adults, and finally to family members". HB 8 will now require school districts to immediately and directly inform parents or guardians if a student discloses their identity to a school employee.

Removing agency from students by disrupting this process places them at higher risk of negative repercussions. These repercussions can be both at home and at school, and policies that forcefully out students are negligent.

I was lucky that my family accepted me for who I was. My father often laments that my tweens and teens would've been different "if he'd only known"-- there was no curriculum on LGBTQIA+ people when he went to school, either.

If there had been, he might've known how to raise a queer and trans child the way *he* wanted to. Instead, this bill takes away the rights of parents and students and gives it to the same small group of lawmakers also listed on HBs 68 and 183.

### Works Cited

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