

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, and Ranking Member Ingram. Thank you for allowing me to address this committee about HB 8.

My name is Cam Ogden and I am a former transgender child. After years of not being affirmed and having to fight for acceptance from my family and peers, I now stand before you as a transgender adult.

I am a college student currently pursuing an education in Political Science and Data Analytics. Before that, I was a Mechanical Engineering student at The Ohio State University. Although I stand before you as a student, the higher education I am pursuing is not important for today's proceedings. What matters is how vulnerable young children will be put in danger by HB 8.

I remember getting my long hair pulled on hard enough to bleed and bruise. I remember my shoes being stolen because they were hand-me-downs from my older sister. I remember being pushed off my bike and kicked by classmates who heard I wore dresses during theater. As a result of this treatment, the course of my life changed. I cut my hair, stopped wearing clothing I wanted to, and quit theater.

Many people have similar memories of their time in school. This includes teachers who are gay or transgender and want to reduce bullying of ALL people in their classes as a result. These teachers are unable to speak about their own identities without violating HB 8's restrictions on free speech. As a result, one of the most powerful ways to foster understanding and respect for queer students is functionally outlawed by HB 8.

If transgender students cannot come forward about bullying without being outed, they will remain easy targets.

This is precisely why HB 8 is referred to as 'The Unsafe Students Act'. These provisions target vulnerable LGBT children specifically and cut off their access to vital support structures. This bill acknowledges the harm it will cause while downplaying the importance of children's safety.

Queer youth have enough trouble in this state, please stop being their biggest bully.

Vote no on HB 8.