



For Young LGBTQ Lives

April 23, 2024

Senate Education Committee Hearing RE: Opposition to HB 8, Enact the Parents' Bill of Rights

Good afternoon,

My name is Gabby Doyle, and I am the Senior Manager of State Advocacy at The Trevor Project. I'm testifying today in opposition of HB 8.

The Trevor Project is the world's leading suicide prevention and mental health organization for LGBTQ+ young people. The Trevor Project offers 24/7 crisis services, connecting highly trained counselors with LGBTQ+ young people whenever they need support.

The Trevor Project also operates robust research, advocacy, education, and peer support programs to prevent young people from reaching crisis in the first place.

In addition to representing our nationwide services, I was raised in Dayton and live here in Columbus. I know firsthand the severe harm that HB 8 would inflict on LGBTQ+ young people here in Ohio if it were to be enacted. I'm proud to live in Ohio, but if enacted, HB 8 could make schools less safe for the children my wife and I hope to raise here.

This new policy would censor a broad range of "sexual concepts or gender ideology" that are not defined in the bill. It would also force counselors and teachers to disclose a student's transgender identity to their parents or guardians without the student's consent, even if there is fear of abuse.

If this bill is passed, it will increase suicide risk among LGBTQ+ students here in Ohio.

Schools play an important role in creating positive spaces for LGBTQ+ youth, and it's essential that young people receive instruction that represents a diverse range of identities, and attend schools where they feel safe and that they can be themselves.

We know that LGBTQ+ youth are not inherently prone to suicide risk because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Rather, they are placed at higher risk by the mistreatment and stigma they experience.

According to [our latest national survey](#), 46% of LGBTQ+ youth in Ohio seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, including over half of transgender and nonbinary youth.

Also, less than 40% of LGBTQ+ young people identified home or school as LGBTQ+ affirming spaces. If this bill is enacted, LGBTQ+ young people will be able to access even less affirming schools.

We know it's essential that all students get an education that encourages curiosity and critical thinking through a broad range of school subjects. This bill sets a dangerous precedent that allows politicians to censor school curriculum they don't like, and undermines the diverse perspectives of parents in a school's community.

A key component of a young LGBTQ+ person's wellbeing is having the support and acceptance of the adults in their life. In a [2019 study by The Trevor Project](#), LGBTQ+ youth who report having at least one accepting adult were far less likely to report a suicide attempt in the past year.

We believe that it is ideal for schools to work with parents in supporting all young people. However, if an LGBTQ+ young person isn't accepted at home, they often seek support at school. This bill means that students would need to choose to be outed to their parents in order to use their name or the right pronouns, or to stay in the closet at school. Both options could cause harm to the young person.

Transgender and nonbinary youth [attempt suicide less](#) when they have access to spaces, like at school, that affirm their gender identity. Transgender and nonbinary youth who reported having pronouns respected by all or most people in their lives also attempted suicide at [half the rate](#) of those who did not have their pronouns respected.

As a reminder, every leading medical establishment affirms the needs of transgender young people, and this year the American Psychological Association [released a memo](#) reaffirming its support for evidence-based inclusive care for transgender young people.

Opposition to inclusive school practices is part of a broader movement to not only oppose LGBTQ+-inclusive policies but also to undermine the rights of gay and transgender Americans by eroding existing protections for LGBTQ+ people in schools, at work, at home, and in public accommodations. **This has nothing to do with parental rights in education.**

It's crucial that we continue to foster inclusive and affirming school environments for LGBTQ+ youth, and as members of the Senate Education Committee, you have the opportunity to model inclusive and affirming behavior by rejecting this cruel, unfounded, and discriminatory bill.

LGBTQ+ youth should be able to thrive in schools that are supportive and affirming of all students. Please vote no on HB 8.