

Opponent Testimony for House Bill 8
Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee
April 21st, 2024

Ross Widenor, City Council President
City of Munroe Falls

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Education Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on this harmful bill. My name is Ross Widenor, and I am the Council President and Ward 1 Council Member for the City of Munroe Falls. The testimony herein is submitted on behalf of me and the undersigned community leaders.

Teachers have an important job to do. They prepare children with the knowledge they need to operate in the world. HB8 seeks to muzzle teachers from accurately representing the range of individuals and families that they will encounter, and possibly identify with, in society. Same-gender couples exist. Transgender people exist. No child is "protected" from anything by attempting to force teachers to pretend otherwise.

On the other hand, LGBTQ+ children are very much harmed by not seeing themselves represented in their curriculum and getting the message that they need to hide and repress themselves in order to be acceptable. The harm to LGBTQ+ children goes further through the provision forcing the disclosure of the fact that a child may be in a questioning phase regarding their sexual orientation or gender identity. Each LGBTQ+ person deserves the right to own their coming-out process, should they ever choose to go through one. Look no further than the statistics that LGBTQ+ youth are 120% more at risk of homelessness and up to 40% of total unaccompanied unhoused youth are LGBTQ+ to see why not everyone rushes to come out to their parents. Schools do not get to make that choice for them.

LGBTQ+ youth are some of the most vulnerable members of our population, and this bill seeks to make their lives harder at every turn. I sincerely hope that this bill will not be taken up for consideration, and that instead we work to make Ohio a welcoming state for all.

Sincerely,



Ross Widenor

Co-signed:

Sandra Kurt, Clerk of the Akron Municipal Court

David Licate, University of Akron Professor, Candidate for Summit County Council

Kyle Herman, Stow City Council At-Large

Kari Suhadolnik, Stow-Munroe Falls Democrats Vice President

Dina Edwards, Woodridge Local Schools teacher, Munroe Falls City Council At-Large

Ryan Shank, Candidate for Summit County Council

Pamela Wind, Stow -Munroe Falls Board of Education Vice President

Nathan Jarosz, Summit County Progressive Democrats President

Carla Brown, Stow Munroe Falls Democrats President

Charlotte Onderick, Stow Munroe Falls Democrats Treasurer

Dylan Carter, College Democrats at the University of Akron President

Jessica Epstein, Tallmadge City Council At-Large

Mary Gutman, Tallmadge City Council Ward 4

Collin Epstein, Tallmadge City Schools Athletic Director

Fran Wilson, Akron Community Organizer