

****Public Testimony Regarding HB8****

April 22, 2024

Ladies and gentlemen of the committee,

My name is Jennifer Morin-Williamson and I writing this public testimony today not only as a concerned citizen but as a woman of faith and an ally to the LGBTQ+ community. I am compelled to speak on the matter of HB8, a bill which, while intending to shield our children from sexually explicit material, I believe overreaches in ways that could harm the very children it aims to protect.

As someone who deeply respects the inherent dignity of all people and all identities—including those of children—I must express my serious concerns with this bill. The language within HB8 is vague and broadly prohibits any educational material that discusses sexual orientation or gender identity. This restriction denies our students access to vital knowledge and suppresses inclusive discussions that are essential for fostering a nurturing and empathetic school environment.

Moreover, this bill includes a provision that requires educators to inform parents if a student discloses their sexual orientation or gender identity to them. This is deeply troubling. Such disclosures are often made in confidence, and violating this trust can have severe consequences on a student's mental health and safety, particularly in unsupportive or hostile home environments.

It is crucial to remember that as educators and legislators, our role is not just to educate but also to protect. Mandating the disclosure of sensitive personal information is not protection—it risks doing profound mental and emotional harm. We must support all students and respect their privacy and their journeys, not endanger them by forcing premature disclosures.

As a person of faith, I believe in loving and accepting all individuals, not just those whose identities mirror our own. It is imperative that our legislation reflects this principle by fostering inclusion rather than exclusion, understanding rather than fear.

I urge you to reconsider this bill and to work towards amendments that protect our children from inappropriate material without compromising their safety or their right to be understood and accepted as they are.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share my concerns today.

Peace,
Jennifer Morin-Williamson
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