



Testimony House Bill 8
Senate Education Committee
Presented by Melissa Cropper, Ohio Federation of Teacher
Opponent Testimony
April 23, 2024

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, and Ranking Member Ingram. I am Melissa Cropper, President of the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT). OFT represents teachers in traditional and charter schools, support staff, higher education faculty and staff, library employees, and other public employees across Ohio, including workers at Kaleidoscope Youth Center who have testified against this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to submit our opponent testimony.

HB 8 would establish a fundamental right for parents to make decisions concerning the “upbringing, education, and care” of the parent’s child, and prescribes specific obligations for schools regarding parental involvement. After being amended four times, HB 8 goes much further than protecting parental rights. It adds broad curriculum censorship reminiscent of the “Don’t Say Gay or Trans” bills from the last General Assembly session, adds a definition of sex to undermine existing civil rights protections granted to LGBTQIA+ people, and creates disclosure and alternative curriculum rules for teachers and counselors that leave educators with impossible and conflicting rules and onerous new obligations, further straining resources and time.

House Bill 8 would put LGBTQ+ students and staff in harm's way in several ways:

- Adds a definition of sex that specifically contradicts Supreme Court precedents and Title IX laws, and undermines existing LGBTQ+ discrimination for employees and students violating the provisions of Title IX. It undermines the Bostock SCOTUS decision, which was authored by conservative Justice Gorsuch declared that discrimination based on sex includes sexual orientation and gender identity by defining sex as sex assigned at birth.
- The bill fails to define age-appropriate oral and written concepts and gender ideology which could lead to lawsuits

- The bill has the potential to make students feel unsafe and put them at risk for bullying given the specific, explicit requirement for counselors and teachers to out a student who questions their gender identity or sexual orientation to their parents, with no exceptions. Even in situations in which there is fear of abuse.
- A parent will have the ability to file a complaint about the topics addressed by an entire class which the school must address within 30 days, even if that parent's child has been removed from class. The bill also specifies that an appeals process for the parents must be put in place. This provision could lead to costly administrative procedures when a student is removed from the class.

OFT has long encouraged parental engagement and will continue to work with parents to provide high-quality learning experiences for students. This bill, however, does nothing to make our schools safer. In fact, you have heard testimony previously from workers at Kaleidoscope, who specifically work with LGBTQIA+ youth, about the potential dangers of this bill and the anxiety it is already causing for our youth. OFT urges you to oppose this bill.