

HB 8

Tuesday, April 23, 3:00 pm

Ohio Statehouse, South Hearing Room

Chair Brenner, Vice chair O'Brien and members of the Senate Education committee, I am here to express my strong opposition to House Bill 8.

This bill does two very concerning things; it erases educators' and trained professionals' ability to do their job and discredits their training. And more importantly, it actively puts youth in danger. I have great respect for educators and generally feel my children have all received great education. I'm thankful for the school counselors and other various support employees who've worked with my kids over the years. I am also fortunate enough to have friends who are educators or work in schools in other capacities and I know how hard they work and how knowledgeable they are. They spend more hours with our kids than we do most of their k-12 years. I think it is fair to say that they may see more and know more about our kids at certain points. Our teachers and other school support staff are specifically trained to teach and support kids. Nothing is perfect, but for the most part I trust Ohio's schools to look out for our kids.

Kids need to feel safe. They need support and people they can trust to be able to thrive in any environment. And when kids are struggling they especially need someone they can go to.. Let's be honest, it would be amazing if every kid felt that their parents were safe to confide in. Safe to be their authentic selves with. The reality is, that's not the case. In some cases it is the opposite, and kids know they will be verbally and sometimes physically abused for even bringing certain things up, let alone tying those ideas to themselves. Some kids may simply be in a place of exploration, and aren't fully ready to commit. Either way, they need a safe place to explore.

This bill will force our youth to put themselves in harm's way. Our family knows this from experience. My kids also have friends who have unaccepting parents. It can be hurtful and dangerous, and can far too often contribute to the unhoused youth population. It also creates an environment of 'othering'. In contrast to what many believe, legislation like this is what creates divisiveness. This bill sends a message that some kids are wrong or bad instead of honing in on kindness and acceptance. Is that what we really want to model for our children?

Instead of making kids feel like they are outlawed or have nowhere to turn, let's continue to give kids safe supportive environments. School should be a place of learning and growth, not a place where kids feel unsafe or are so distracted by their fear they can't focus on learning. Let's let the trained professionals do their jobs.

Thank You,
Kat Scaglione