

Testimony of John M. Herbert, Ph.D.  
Before the Senate Education Committee  
Senator Andrew O. Brenner, Chair

December 9, 2024

To: Chair A. O. Brenner, Vice Chair S. O'Brien, and Ranking Member C. D. Ingram:

My name is John Herbert and I am a Professor of Chemistry at The Ohio State University, where I have taught for 18 years. From 2018–2023, I served as the faculty advisor to Ohio State's chapter of [“Out in STEM”](#), which provides a peer group for LGBTQ students in Science, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). Here, I am submitting testimony as a private citizen (not as a representative to Ohio State), **in opposition to HB 8**, even in its amended form.

HB 8 would require schools to notify parents of any request by a child to identify as a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth. While this may seem reasonable on its face to some parents, such a provision would present a very real threat to the mental health and safety of transgender, nonbinary, and gender diverse children. The sad reality is that many such children do not face an affirming environment at home. This is reflected in the fact that nearly [half of transgender adolescents suffer homelessness or housing instability](#), often originating in rejection by family. According to the [Centers for Disease Control](#), [one in four](#) transgender high school students has attempted suicide within the past year, as compared to 5% of cisgender boys and 11% of cisgender girls. There are [voluminous](#) other [data](#) to [demonstrate](#) that transgender adolescents are at considerably higher suicide risk as compared to their cisgender peers. These data include a [new study](#) showing that LGBTQ adolescent suicidality increased between 2018 and 2022, specifically in states that passed anti-trans laws, as compared to the same demographic in states without such laws. Meanwhile, the data are [equally compelling](#) that gender-affirming care yields benefits for trans, nonbinary, and gender-diverse youth. For that reason, such care is endorsed by the [American Psychological Association](#), the [American Medical Association](#), and the [American College of Physicians](#).

Note that gender-affirming care for minors doesn't typically mean the surgical interventions that are available to adults (and certainly not without parental consent). In many cases, it simply means engaging children and adolescents in a way that reflects their choices and their preferred identity. To do otherwise is to endanger the mental health—and thus the physical health—of our kids. Simply put, if passed, **HB 8 will result in more dead children**. That is an outcome, I would hope, that no one wants. Turning educators and school staff into gender police serves no educational purpose and should be dropped from this bill.