

Subject: Protect Student Privacy: Oppose HB 8

To whom it may concern

As a new social worker and a queer individual, I am writing with deep concern about Ohio House Bill 8. This bill not only jeopardizes the privacy and safety of students in school settings but also has the potential to cause lasting emotional and psychological harm to the very youth we strive to protect.

I grew up in a conservative household where sharing my identity felt impossible. If someone had “outed” me before I was ready, I fear it would have led to rejection, conflict, or worse. Having the chance to explore and understand my identity privately was essential to my well-being and self-acceptance. I shudder to think what could have happened if I’d been forced to disclose this part of myself before I felt safe to do so.

HB 8’s mandate to notify parents about a student’s request to identify as a gender different from their biological sex removes the fundamental right of students to self-determination and privacy. For many young people, especially those in unsupportive or unsafe households, their therapist or school social worker may be the only trusted adult they can turn to. Requiring social workers to breach this confidentiality could destroy that trust, leaving students feeling isolated and unsupported.

Clinical Therapists are already guided by ethical standards to ensure safety and well-being. We are trained to balance transparency with discretion and to engage families when appropriate while protecting the student’s best interests. HB 8 would strip away that professional judgment, forcing disclosures that could cause irreparable harm. Please consider that each individual may not be protected by a loving family when this information is forced to be disclosed.

I urge you to oppose this bill and stand for the privacy, safety, and self-determination of Ohio’s youth. Every student deserves a safe space to grow and thrive, and every social worker deserves the ability to make thoughtful, ethical decisions in their practice.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,
Lauren Sanderson
Clinical Therapist
Bowling Green State University Graduate
Soon to be a licensed social worker

Sent from my iPhone