

Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, I'm Kara Butlien-Cohen, an educator who strongly urges a no vote on Ohio HB 8. While I'm not here in person, I want to emphasize the harmful impacts of this bill.

Schools already face numerous challenges: inadequate funding, excessive standardized testing, and various accountability measures. HB 8 would add to these burdens.

Let's examine the key provisions of the Parental Bill of Rights in HB 8:

- **Parental Rights:** Establishes parents' fundamental rights regarding their children's upbringing, education, and care.
- **Notification and Consent:** Requires schools to notify parents about instructional materials with sexuality content and obtain parental consent for healthcare services.
- **Access to Information:** Grants parents access to their child's school records, medical records, and information about school programs.
- **Opt-Out Provisions:** Allows parents to opt their children out of certain educational activities, instructional materials, and healthcare services.
- **Enforcement:** Provides a cause of action for parents to enforce their rights and seek remedies for violations.

While the bill aims to empower parents, it neglects the increased governmental control in public education. This would hinder schools' effectiveness and impose additional administrative burdens. Additionally, parents already have the ability to access all materials, records, and other information from the school district.

The bill's provisions may lead to:

- **Increased bullying and harassment:** Inadvertently outing LGBTQ+ students and creating a hostile environment.
- **Restrictions on inclusive education:** Challenging inclusive education, such as teaching LGBTQ+ history, literature, or sex education.
- **Negative impact on LGBTQ+ youth mental health:** Exacerbating mental health issues, suicidal thoughts, and attempts among LGBTQ+ youth.
- **Parental rights vs. student rights:** Creating conflicts between parental rights and student rights, particularly for marginalized communities.
- **Administrative burdens and lawsuits:** Imposing significant administrative burdens on schools, potentially leading to lawsuits and financial liabilities.
- **Chilling effect on teachers and educators:** Causing teachers and educators to self-censor or avoid discussing certain topics.
- **Disproportionate impact on marginalized communities:** Disproportionately affecting marginalized communities, including LGBTQ+ individuals, people of color, and students with disabilities.

HB 8 doesn't address the actual factors impacting educational outcomes, such as generational poverty, trauma, and hunger. Instead of focusing on distractions, we should prioritize the real challenges.

Therefore, I strongly urge a no vote on Ohio HB 8.

Kara Butlien-Cohen

