

Hello,

I am a life-long Ohio Citizen and a behavioral health professional with roughly a decade of healthcare experience serving vulnerable, high needs populations. I am writing to urge the house to reject HB8. I think this bill is naked intimidation of the LGBTQ community, particularly people who are trans. It will turn school, a place that should be for all children to learn and develop into productive citizens, into somewhere that is no longer safe for that community. It will turn every administrator and teacher into essentially a snitch on the personal identity traits of their students, which is in no way essential to education. Who their students are dating or how they wear their hair could not possibly be less the domain of a public educator to police and the state shouldn't put it on them to do so. Parents already have all the right they could possibly want to enforce whatever arbitrary rules or way of life in their homes, save abuse and neglect. It is their burden to show their children the value and worthwhile of their ways and to control them if they disagree. This bill will give parents no additional rights and instead, enforces dystopian, police-state surveillance like practices in public schools, ensuring children will be more afraid to be truly themselves.

In my career experience having worked with LGBTQ individuals and as a member of that community, I can say with great confidence that this legislation will lead to an increase in real, measurable harms. The most obvious of these will be increased mental health problems from this community, which will also a taxpayer burden, ultimately. Increased incidents of bullying, suicide, more school tardiness and absenteeism, greater teacher, worse academic performance, dissatisfaction and burn out; all these will be downstream effects. This has been seen in other states that have passed similar legislation already.

I am urging Ohio lawmakers to do better by its citizens, to not succumb to the fear and loathing scape-goating of the times. I urge our lawmakers to read your history. Remember the satanic panic, the red scare, the internment of the Japanese. Our society has been here before. Will you let fear and bias guide you to harm or will history remember you as those who stood against hate and for reason, for the health and safety of all of its citizens?

This bill does not meaningfully promote parental rights, will worsen the health of our populace, and is a naked facade for attacking the LGBTQ community.

Thank you,

A.J. Godbey