

Testimony Opposing Ohio House Bill 8

Kevin Lydy

Parent, Teacher

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Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in opposition to Ohio House Bill 8. My name is Kevin Lydy, and I am both a parent of children enrolled in Ohio's public education system as well as a former teacher with over 20 years of experience supporting students and families across Ohio.

I am here to express my deep concern that House Bill 8 will unintentionally harm the crucial trust that exists between students and the educators, counselors, and social workers who support them. This trust is not just a nice-to-have—it is essential to fostering healthy, productive partnerships between families and schools.

Impact on the Student-Teacher Relationship

At its core, education is a partnership, and that partnership relies on open and honest communication. Many students come to their teachers, counselors, or social workers because they feel safe confiding in us. We serve as trusted adults who can provide support, resources, and, when needed, involve families to address their concerns collaboratively.

House Bill 8 would create a chilling effect on this trust. Students, particularly those navigating difficult personal issues, may no longer feel comfortable confiding in us if they believe that every detail will immediately be disclosed, regardless of the context. This will lead to fewer students seeking help, even in situations where intervention could be life-saving.

Breakdown of the Family-School Partnership

It is important to recognize that schools do not replace families; we work alongside them to help students thrive. By creating barriers to communication and discouraging students from seeking support at school, this bill undermines the very partnership it seeks to protect. Families cannot address problems they don't know about, but those problems will only be harder to identify if students retreat into silence.

We have already seen the consequences of policies that erode trust. In schools where similar mandates have been implemented, educators report fewer students coming forward with concerns about mental health, bullying, or safety. This does not strengthen families—it isolates students and leaves families less informed about the challenges their children are facing.

Conclusion

In closing, House Bill 8 risks significant unintended consequences: weakening the student-teacher relationship, discouraging students from seeking help, and undermining the critical partnership between families and schools. For the well-being of our students, I urge you to oppose this bill. Instead, let us focus on policies that foster trust, build collaboration, and support the shared goal of helping students succeed.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I hope you will do the right thing in opposing HB 8.