

Interested Party Testimony for H. B. No. 8
Education Committee
12/10/2024

Max Swartout, Elementary Music Teacher
Walls Elementary, Kent City School District

Chair Brenner , Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify in writing. My name is Max Calton Swartout. I am an interested party, an elementary music teacher in the City of Kent, and a resident of the City of Cuyahoga Falls. I am writing to express my concerns that (1) there is no definition as to "instructional materials" in this bill; and (2) the definition of "sexuality content" does not provide any clarification as to the ability of families (of students and faculty) to be proud and open about their own family make-up.

I love my job as an elementary music teacher. I care deeply for my students, my colleagues, our families, and our community. I am also gay. I have a loving partner who is a fellow public servant. I want to be proud of my family just as my straight colleagues are. There is no question as to their ability to discuss their families and their husbands/wives with and in front of their students. I worry about this bill's impact on my ability to be proud of my family with and in front of my students. I also worry about my students' abilities to discuss and be proud of their families.

I want to know that families like mine and families like those which exist in my school community can live and exist with freedom to be proud of their family. I do not want to hide a huge part of my life because my family make-up could be construed as a "sexual concept" and just mentioning my husband or showing a picture of me with him and our children on the first day of school as a "get to know the teacher" introduction could be considered "instructional material."

I am testifying to add voice to this concern that I know many families in Ohio have regarding this bill. We want to be proud of our families, just like anyone else. We do not want to hide. Doing so would hurt us, but it would also teach shame to our students.

I ask that you please consider my testimony, and amend this bill to make it clear and certain that educators like me and families like mine of many other faculty and students do not have to feel shame and hide pride and love for their families.

Thank you. I'm happy to discuss this further.