

Opponent Testimony for H.B. 8
Ohio Senate Education Committee

December 8, 2024

Dear Chair Andrew Brenner, Vice Chair Sandra O'Brien, Ranking Member Catherine Ingram, and Esteemed Senate Education Committee Members Louis Blessing III, Stephan Huffman, Michele Reynolds, and Vernon Sykes:

Thank you for carefully reading and considering my written testimony. My name is Amanda Fontana. I am an Adjunct Instructor in a Human and Social Service program at a community college in Stark County, Ohio, a Board of Education member in New Philadelphia, Ohio, a social worker, and most importantly, a parent of three children. I am writing to express my opposition to House Bill 8.

As a social worker, this bill would conflict with the Code of Ethics outlined by the National Association of Social Workers. Social Workers have an ethical responsibility to clients, which includes privacy and confidentiality. A bill forcing social workers to violate these ethical responsibilities would create a conflict of duties. As a Board of Education member, I am able to see the increasing obligations placed on our staff, teachers, and social workers. These additional obligations stemming from HB 8 would create a scenario that would deter those from entering the education field and cause educators to leave the field in its entirety. This would be a significant blow to the education system, which is already experiencing a state-wide teacher shortage.

As a mother of three children, one an adult with severe developmental disabilities, another a senior in college, and one still in elementary school, I can assure you that I have never been denied information about any of my children throughout their schooling. Concerns about curriculum or educational materials have never been an issue because this information is public, and parents already have access to this information. As a parent, I already have a right to remove my child from class if I disagree with the information being taught. Furthermore, I also have the right to homeschool my children or use an education voucher to choose a different school setting. Parents already have rights, and they already have many options when it comes to their children's education.

Finally, as a mother, educator, social worker, and board of education member, I am tremendously concerned for students who would be negatively affected by this bill. As a student, I was fortunate enough to have teachers that I could trust when I went to school. My school was the only place that I felt safe as a child. I could share with my teachers in confidence why I did not feel safe elsewhere. I was able to get the help and support that I needed. I can assure you that if I had thought for one second that I could not trust my teachers with what was happening, I would not have gone to them for help. I realize that the bill outlines that sharing such information about a student would not be permissible if a student would be harmed, abused, or neglected in any way. However, as a scared child simply looking for an adult with whom they can feel safe, the

fine print of this bill would not be enough to provide the security they would need to seek the help of a trusted adult. We often talk about it taking a village to raise a child, and it most certainly does. Please do not be the one's who would take a child's village away from them.

Please consider my testimony and oppose HB 8.

Respectfully,

Amanda Fontana