



TransOhio, Inc.  
P.O. Box 18272  
Cleveland, Ohio 44118  
transohio@transohio.org

Education Committee  
1 Capitol Square  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
brenner@ohiosenate.gov

December 10, 2024

RE: HB8 “Parents Bill of Rights” or the unsafe student bill - *oppositional testimony*

Dear Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and fellow respected Committee Members:

My name is Dara Adkison. My pronouns are they/them. And today, I stand before you on behalf of TransOhio—Ohio’s first statewide trans-led equity organization; dedicated to protecting and advancing the rights of trans, nonbinary, intersex, and gender nonconforming people in Ohio. However, I am also testifying as a parent and as a trans person deeply concerned about the harm this bill will cause.

This is now the fourth time I’ve testified against legislation like this. Each time, I’ve hoped lawmakers would recognize the real-life harm impact these policies have on families and choose a path of inclusion and fairness. Yet, here we are again, debating another bill that fosters division, otherization, and marginalization instead of addressing the actual needs of Ohio’s students and families.

HB8 is presented as a measure to increase parental rights in education, but in practice, it undermines the rights of parents like me simply because of my presumed gender. I am a transgender Ohioan. Why should my gender invalidate my child’s right to be represented in their education? My family is amazing, caring, and loving: we do not need to be hidden. From early education, students learn about families, communities, and the world around them. Lessons on family structures, community dynamics, and cultural diversity are fundamental to understanding society and a tenant of early childhood education. LGBTQIA+ families, like mine, are part of that reality. LGBTQIA+ families belong in the curriculum just by virtue of existing in schools as members of the community. Stop making our existence political — we just want to be. I urge you to reject the notion that LGBTQIA+ families should be excluded from this foundational learning. I’d never ask the same of families that differ from my own. So as a parent of an Ohio public

school student, an involved member of my school community, I say very clearly — trans people, LGBTQIA+ people, and our FAMILIES belong in the curriculum.

We deserve to be acknowledged, not erased. And attempts to erase us will not remove us from schools, just like other laws seeking to remove trans people from public spaces will only make those spaces more dangerous for all and not succeed at erasing trans people.

This bill introduces vague and harmful provisions that compromise trust between students and educators. For example, the requirement to report "changes to a student's mental, emotional, or physical health or well-being" is coded language intended to forcibly "out" LGBTQIA+ students to their families, even in situations where such disclosure could jeopardize their safety. Schools must remain safe, trusted spaces for all students, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. HB8's vague standards undermine the Ohio Department of Education's Whole Child Framework, which emphasizes equity and meeting the specific needs of individual students. How does this bill address the needs of LGBTQIA+ students? It does not.

Ohio already has regulations that govern parental notice, review, and opting out of instruction. And has for a while. This is a non-issue. Public schools are already required to establish policies that allow parents to be actively involved in their children's education. Parents can attend school board meetings or read the minutes later from home. Parents can attend PTA meetings. Parents can review the lesson plans and homework at any point during the school year. Parents can attend parent-teacher conferences and request additional meetings as necessary. Parents can communicate directly with their children's teachers. It has never been easier to be involved.

I ask that you consider the broader implications of HB8. Every person has a gender identity—even you—though you may have never had to reflect on it in the way trans people do. Let children have the space to grow, learn, and explore who they are in their own time, free from fear and judgment.

TransOhio urges you, on behalf of the greater trans community, to **stop the politicalization of our existence**. Hurting trans kids may be the hot issue of the moment that is being whispered in your ears, but ask yourself if this is truly the legacy you want to leave. Not better funding of schools, not feeding kids, not better long lasting infrastructure across this state, nothing.

We urge you to **vote no**. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact us with any questions. We welcome further discussion.

Respectfully,  
TransOhio Board of Directors and Executive Director