

Opponent Testimony for House Bill 8  
Senate Education Committee  
Rev. Andrew Burns  
Dec. 8, 2024

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify via writing. My name is Rev. Andrew Burns (he/him). I am an ordained Elder in the United Methodist Church. I serve a church in central Ohio, many members of which would be negatively impacted by House Bill 8. It is out of concern for their wellbeing that I oppose House Bill 8 and ask you to do the same.

Over 50% of my congregation identifies with one of the letters in "LGBTQ+." This includes school-age children and teenagers, as well as parents of school-age children and teenagers. Most of my church's children go to public schools, and many of them have two parents of the same sex. These are simple and rather boring facts of their lives. But House Bill 8 worries me because of the way it targets those simple and boring facts of life. If House Bill 8 is approved and becomes law, it would not improve anything in Ohio's schools. It would only create an environment of hostility and censorship in Ohio's schools, pointed at LGBTQ+ students and their families.

The bill is aimed at my people, those I have been charged to care for. Many people in my flock have already faced harassment and discrimination on the basis of their God-given sexual orientation and gender identity. This bill would give permission for that harassment and discrimination to continue while offering no solution to any problem. My people are already worried about how they will continue to live and exist in their communities. This bill only deepens their justified fears.

I am testifying against House Bill 8 out of concern for my congregation. I ask that you please consider my testimony and vote no on House Bill 8.