

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

My name is Eli Minshall and I am writing in opposition of HB 8. I have lived in Ohio my entire life and attended several different school districts. I do not have children myself, but I have nieces and nephews that I care about. I am also part of the LGBTQ+ community, which will be disproportionately impacted by this bill.

I reflect rather fondly on my school memories, and that is largely because of the teachers I had. They were not afraid to answer our questions or discuss topics we brought up, which I am worried cannot happen if this bill passes. Children spend most of their day at school and need a healthy, safe, bond with the adults around them. This is critical for their safety. They should feel comfortable to talk to their teachers and counselors without being worried their parents will be told everything they say. I agree that certain situations should be reported, this is why teachers and counselors are already mandated reporters.

This bill will specifically require a school to notify a student's parent of "any request by a student to identify as a gender that does not align with the student's biological sex". This is dangerous for LGBTQ+ children who may not be safe at home, mentally, emotionally, and/or physically. If they feel safe, children will come out on their own, they do not need to be forced out and into a potentially harmful situation.

This bill also requires schools to disclose to parents instructional material that includes any "oral or written instruction, presentation, image, or description of sexual concepts or gender ideology". The phrase "gender ideology" itself does not have a clear or concise definition, as it was born out of modern discriminatory movements. Furthermore, no details or an attempt at a definition of "gender ideology" was made in this bill. This is not only confusing, but will take useful time away from educators while they determine what content they need to disclose. Teachers already use guidelines from the state and district, their many years of education and experience, and their best judgement to teach our children, we do not need to ask more of them.

I urge you to join me in opposing this bill. This bill will damage the relationship children have with every adult in their life and disrupt their education.

Thank you,
Eli Minshall