

Opponent Testimony for HB 8 – Written-Only
Senate Education Committee
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Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Ohio Senate Education Committee;

Thank you for considering my testimony. My name is Natalie Noyes, and I use both they/them and she/her pronouns interchangeably. I am a lifelong resident of Ohio, presently living in Lancaster, Ohio. I practiced law for seven years before switching careers and I am now an independently licensed professional clinical counselor. I am also a nonbinary, bisexual person whose entire early education relied upon Ohio's public school system. **I am writing to urge you to oppose HB 8 which would endanger LGBTQ+ youth and place insurmountable burdens on Ohio teaching and counseling professionals.**

I oppose the entire bill, but I am most concerned with the unique risk this bill poses to youth safety. LGBTQ+ youth are **more than four times** as likely to **attempt suicide** than their peers¹. **26% of homeless LGBTQ youth** report being forced out of their homes **solely because of their sexual orientation or gender identity**². This data exists without the impact of legislation like HB 8 which requires our teachers and counselors to out youth to their families, even in instances where abuse is present. These numbers will increase if HB 8 is allowed to become the law in Ohio.

Caregivers' rights are foundational to Ohio law but have always been subject to the responsibilities of those caregivers to protect the health and safety of those children in their care. Having worked in juvenile courts in Ohio, specifically on abuse, neglect, and dependency cases, as both an attorney and as a mental health professional, I have seen Ohio's judiciary balance these values and

¹ Johns, M. M., Lowry, R., Haderxhanaj, L. T., et al. (2020). Trends in violence victimization and suicide risk by sexual identity among high school students — Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2015–2019. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 69,(Suppl-1):19–27.

² National Coalition for the Homeless. (2020). *Homelessness among the LGBTQ Community*. <https://nationalhomeless.org/lgbtq-homelessness/>

support the best interests of youth. **Legislation such as HB 8 goes directly against these values as it asserts that the right of the caregivers outweighs the right to safety for LGBTQ+ youth.**

Additionally, Ohio's teachers and school counselors will be faced with an undue burden of first outing students to their families and second removing any illusion to the poorly defined "sexuality content" in their offices and classrooms. Teachers and counselors are already mandated reporters when it comes to child abuse. However, the requirement that they must out a student to their family risks them subjecting their students to potential abuse, going against their ethical and legal obligations. Further, the definition of "sexuality content" is overbroad and subject to considerable interpretation that could have schools and teachers forced to have a hearing within thirty days for the mere teaching of history, language arts, or mathematics. There are important historical figures, from Harvey Milk to Alan Turing to James Baldwin, whose ideas might be limited from a curriculum simply due to concerns arising from this bill.

As a member of the LGBTQ+ community myself, limiting youth exposure to people like me does not provide additional safety to cisgender, heterosexual youth. Instead, it denies that same safety to LGBTQ+ youth. **The only result here is increased danger for LGBTQ+ youth and increased risks and harms to the teaching and counseling professions. I urge you to oppose HB 8.**

Natalie A. Noyes (she/they)

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