

To the Honorable Committee Chair Andrew Brenner, Vice Chair Sandra O'Brien, Ranking Democrat Catherine Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee:

I am writing to urge you to vote NO on House Bill 8 when it comes up for a vote, and to speak up firmly against it in the Education Committee hearing on December 10.

This harmful bill would jeopardize the privacy and safety of Ohio's students, particularly LGBTQ+ youth, by requiring schools to share sensitive information with parents without exceptions—even when the student's safety is at risk. Simply complying with this bill and reporting to child protective services at the same time may be too late for the safety of the child. Teachers should not have to risk their jobs to protect a child.

HB 8's vague restrictions on "sexuality content" would also stifle vital classroom discussions about relationships, diversity, and identity, harming all students by preventing inclusive, age-appropriate education. Students come up with all kinds of questions. Should a teacher be unable to answer a child's questions about another child's gay parents? How will that second child feel, knowing their parents are not to be talked about? Gay marriage is legal. We tolerate those who don't believe in it, we don't cater to them. Do we forbid speaking about driving cars because some people's religions don't believe in driving them?

And what of age-appropriate books in school libraries? Are they also "instructional materials" according to this bill? Must *And Tango Makes Three* be removed from elementary school libraries because it talks about two male penguins raising a chick, based on a true story? You may be aware that this very book has been banned in Florida, and is the subject of a lawsuit for doing so. Escambia County has spent over \$100,000 so far defending its decision to remove it. And what of *The Bluest Eye* by Nobel Prize laureate Ohioan Toni Morrison? As the third-most challenged book of 2022, and an oft-chosen selection for AP English literature, is this book too difficult for high schoolers? Who sets the bar? H. B. 8 does not say.

Please protect Ohio's students by voting NO on HB 8. Our children's safety and well-being depend on your leadership.

Sincerely,

Sharon Hawkes, MLIS
Chagrin Falls, OH

Submitted 12/09/2024