

**Dear Senators O'Brien and Brenner--**

**Attached please find my completed testimony form opposing HB 8. My testimony itself is included below. I hope you will do all in your power to stop this harmful legislation.**

Dear Senate Committee Members:

I am a voter living in Cleveland Heights, (44118) writing to register my deep alarm and opposition to anti-LGBTQ, anti-youth legislation being heard in the Ohio Senate this week in HB 8.

I am a cisgendered gay woman who grew up in this very district and, like so many LGBTQ youth, barely made it to adulthood in the face of the homophobia of my family, religious community, and mirrored in the laws of our state and country. I left Ohio for the state of New York where I knew there were more protections for queer people like me. Tireless advocates helped shift the tide of public opinion, policy, and law as I entered adulthood. The day that the Supreme Court made marriage equality federal law, my then fiancée (now wife) called me and said "this changes so much for us. We could go anywhere." I thought: "We could even move home. Ohio could be home again."

Many of the same people who once stood between me and calling Ohio home have, now that public mores have shifted to make blatant homophobia against cisgendered queer adults unacceptable, turned on queer and trans youth and the teacher who support them. In particular, they have set out to annihilate access to affirming media and self-expression of people too young to even vote for their own rights. State lawmakers who know they can no longer isolate and abuse people like me seek to attack gender-expansive youth.

When I was too young to vote for my own rights, my LGBT elders fought for a future where Ohio could be my home, where my wife and I can contribute to our community as workers, taxpayers, and neighbors. The human, communal, and economic cost of HB 8 will be enormous if made law.

While my first concern and duty is to the young members of my community who will be most directly harmed by this legislation, I cannot help but grieve for all of us if this comes to pass: Ohio will be so much the poorer. Companies trying to attract the best future workforce will think twice before putting down roots in such a state. These young people will go elsewhere, to states with less cruel legislation, or will die before they ever even reach adulthood, or will suffer unspeakably until they can at least turn their backs on Ohio forever.

Queer youth are precious, vital members of Ohio's present and future. I'm sure I can count on you to speak out strongly against HB 8 and want to make sure my opposition is heard loud and clear in Columbus.

Many thanks,  
Elisabeth Plumlee-Watson  
44118

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**Elisabeth Plumlee-Watson**