

December 8, 2024

To the Honorable Members of the Ohio House of Representatives:

RE: Opposition to House Bill 8 - "Parents' Bill of Rights"

Dear Representatives,

We at TransHumanity write to express our unequivocal opposition to House Bill 8, misleadingly titled the "Parents' Bill of Rights." This legislation, which prohibits discussions of LGBTQ+ identities in schools and mandates forced outings of LGBTQ+ youth to parents, represents a dire threat to the safety, well-being, and fundamental rights of Ohio's most vulnerable children.

The Harmful Impact on LGBTQ+ Youth

House Bill 8's policies will have devastating consequences for LGBTQ+ youth in Ohio. Research shows that affirming environments and supportive educators significantly reduce suicide rates and mental health challenges among LGBTQ+ children. Yet, this bill seeks to create a hostile educational atmosphere by silencing open discussions and affirmations of LGBTQ+ identities, thereby fostering ignorance, intolerance, and discrimination.

The forced outing provision is particularly egregious. It puts young people at risk of physical harm, homelessness, and rejection by family members who may not yet accept their child's identity. Studies indicate that up to 40% of homeless youth in the United States identify as LGBTQ+, often due to familial rejection. HB 8 will exacerbate this crisis, tearing families apart and forcing children into unsafe situations.

Moreover, this legislation undermines the fundamental trust between students and educators, eroding the safe spaces that schools are meant to provide. LGBTQ+ students will feel they cannot confide in trusted adults for fear that their identities will be disclosed without their consent, leaving them isolated and without essential support networks.

The Disservice to Parental Rights

While this bill claims to champion parental rights, it ignores the diverse realities of family dynamics and the nuanced needs of LGBTQ+ children. True parental rights include the right to raise children in a society where they are free from harm, discrimination, and government overreach into personal family matters. This bill does not empower parents; it empowers the state to intervene in deeply personal, sensitive, and individual matters of family life.

Contradiction of Ohio's Values

Ohio has long prided itself on being a state that champions liberty, opportunity, and respect for all. HB 8 is a direct affront to these values. By denying LGBTQ+ youth the dignity of being acknowledged for who they are and placing them at greater risk of harm, this legislation strips away the very freedoms it claims to protect.

Ending Argument: An Irrefutable Truth

We are a nation founded on the principle that all individuals are created equal, and endowed with unalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. House Bill 8 denies these rights to LGBTQ+ youth, relegating them to second-class citizens and endangering their lives.

To those who champion this legislation under the guise of morality and family values, we ask: What is moral about inflicting harm on children? What values are upheld by silencing, shaming, and endangering our youth?

As leaders, you have a solemn duty to protect the well-being of all Ohioans, including LGBTQ+ youth. History will remember whether you stood on justice and compassion or aligned yourself with policies that caused immeasurable harm. We urge you to reject House Bill 8 and instead focus on legislation that uplifts and protects all of Ohio's children.

Sincerely,

Jolene Ephraim Serenity Strieter

Founding Director, TransHumanity

Advocating for Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion for All Humanity