

Opponent Testimony for House Bill Eight
Senate Education Committee
December 8, 2024

Kade Gregory Ebert, LGBTQ+ Member
Representing Self

Chair Andrew O. Brenner, Vice Chair Sandra O'Brien, Ranking Member Catherine D. Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee Louis W. Blessing the Third, Michele Reynolds, and Vernon Sykes.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today in writing for you all. My name is Kade Gregory Ebert, and I use They/Them pronouns. I am a gay college student attending Kent State University in Kent Ohio, but I live in Marion Ohio. As to why I am not there in person testifying today. I am here to oppose House Bill Eight and any other groups, persons, bills that threaten queer rights.

Being a queer person anywhere in Ohio is already a challenge, especially when you are born in the small town of Marion Ohio. I grew up ostracized in many ways as a kid, being the only very feminine male in my area. From an early age my femininity sparked bullying from peers as a child. I was hardly ever friends with boys as they would tease me, and finding excepting girls was difficult for me too. Kids would often call me gay, like it was something to be ashamed of. And growing up not understanding why I felt so different and being unable to put it to words made everything worse. Not seeing many people who were like me made me feel like everyone was right, and that maybe I was wrong. Concluding that what everyone had been teasing me about my entire life was true, was devastating for me. The inappropriate type of behavior from others has continued to follow me my entire life. I dreaded my last year of high school, going on dates with people who would not dare tell anyone we were together, or only seeing them at night, or if they were bold in-between classes when no one was looking. On top of it all, my high school graduation speaker proceeded to also openly condemn queerness without penalty. Which was my last straw. So, unlike my classmates who got to stay in their small town, I had to move away to be able to start a life for myself. And as I grew older, I begun to change but it seemed that the people around me and from my past had not. And that is due to a direct lack of education.

With an education and normalization of queerness, there is a chance that no other child or person must go through what I did for the first 18 years of my life. Teaching and protecting queerness in and out of schools is not something people should fear. Teaching about queerness is teaching about self-expression, being tolerant, and understanding people outside of ourselves. The LGBTQ+ Community deserves to be seen and protected, so that future generations of LGBTQ+ kids do not have to live in fear or confusion like me and so many others. Because no other child deserves to face the uncertainty and cruelty that I experienced.

As previously stated, I am testifying against House Bill Eight and to protect queer people everywhere. To also give the next generation of queer kids a better chance to a better life than I had. So, I ask that you take myself and many other members of the LGBTQ+

community, perspectives into view when making your decision. And I would like to see the committee to vote no on House Bill Eight.

Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.