

Opponent Testimony for House Bill 8
Ohio Senate Education Committee
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Tanasia Morton, School Administrator
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio Speakers Bureau

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Education committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Tanasia Morton and my pronouns are she/her. I am a school administrator in the suburban Cleveland area. Before this, I spent several years in the classroom in New York City, Cleveland, and Columbus. I am here to encourage you all to vote no on House Bill 8.

When you search "teacher" on Indeed in Cleveland, you find 21 postings from schools with immediate openings. There are currently 64 open positions for substitutes on the Ohio Substitute Teacher services website. On October 24, Senate Bill 168 lowered the teacher qualifications threshold in Ohio due to the teacher shortage. Our students deserve quality education in a safe environment from people dedicated to their career, but teachers are underpaid, overworked, and tired.

Often teachers are asked to "remember their why" when the career gets tough. Here is my why: As a little Black girl growing up in Cleveland, I always knew I wanted to go into education. I have **always wanted to be the support in school that I did not have when I was younger**. If HB 8 is passed and becomes law, I will be forced to out children to their parents if they disclose to me they are LBGTQ+, no matter their home situation. This will hinder queer students' ability to feel safe, which will then hinder their ability to learn. If HB 8 is passed queer students will always feel as if they are walking on eggshells around their teachers. Every day, students come into my office and feel safe to disclose information to me about their personal lives. School is a safe space for many students. It is where they can be themselves, receive meals, and receive quality education from teachers who care about them. If House Bill 8 is passed, queer students will lose their safe space.

House Bill 8 will only add to the teacher shortage we face in Ohio. It does not matter how low you lower the standards for people to teach in the state of Ohio, if there is no one who wants to be in the classroom because of the government overreach into our profession. When the teacher shortage expands, which schools will suffer the most? Our lower income community public schools, like the one I graduated from.

Teachers deserve higher pay, better community support, and to focus on providing quality education to their students, instead of jumping through hoops for politicians. Teachers shouldn't be required to break trust and put a student in harm's way of their parents, guardians, or family

because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. House Bill 8 fosters an environment where educators feel intimidated and micromanaged, which hinders their ability to provide safe, inclusive, and effective education. Trust between educators and students is crucial, and this legislation jeopardizes that relationship. I ask that you please consider my testimony and vote no on House Bill 8.

Thank you. I'm happy to answer any questions.