

Chairman Brenner, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Kristen Angelo. I am a lifelong resident of Ohio and a gay woman who currently lives in the small town of Walbridge with my wife and our 14 year old son. I am strongly opposed to HB 8.

I knew I was gay when I was in middle school. I came out to some friends and trusted adults in high school, but I was terrified of how my parents would react. I struggled a lot with my sexuality and I leaned heavily on my high school English teacher, Mrs Ramey, for support. I would stop by her classroom during lunch or study hall or after school. I expressed my worries, my fears, my concerns. She listened. I ranted and raved. She listened. I questioned, I theorized, I begged. She listened.

Mrs Ramey never guided me. Mrs Ramey did not instruct me, direct me, indoctrinate me, or anything else. She merely nodded. She gave noncommittal noises. But she let me figure things out for myself. She offered a safe space to talk and be heard and be seen. She did not influence me. But I can tell you, she saved my life. When all of the bullies found out I was gay, her classroom was my one safe refuge. Her support kept me alive.

Mrs Ramey, like many of these other teachers in schools, was nothing more than a listening ear. She never offered to drive any students to get a legal name change or to obtain gender affirming care. She never encouraged anyone to join the LGBTQ+ community. She was merely a safe haven for those of us who desperately needed it. These teachers work so hard to protect and support their students. Please don't punish them.

We lost Mrs Ramey a few years ago to cancer, but her memory lives on with her students. I know I will never forget the woman who saved my life. I can promise every queer adult has a teacher in their memory like Mrs Ramey. Please don't punish the Mrs Ramey's of our world.

Protect our queer students. Do not pass HB 8. It sounds so much like "hate" when you say the bill aloud.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful, damaging bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.