

Dear Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien and members of the Education Committee,

I am writing to express strong opposition to HB 8. This bill puts the privacy and well-being of Ohio students at risk. It is imperative that trust between young people and a teacher or other school staff member remain intact; for students who do not feel safe at home, sometimes they have nowhere else to turn but to a teacher or guidance counselor.

While we hope that every young person could rely on immediate family members and parents, we unfortunately understand that is not the reality. These generalized parameters cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach for supporting our young people, as for many students – especially LGBTQ+ students – they will do just the opposite.

Additionally, HB 8's vague language regarding "sexuality content" would chill vital conversations about sexual orientation, gender identity, and diversity in family or relationship dynamics. It is also wholly unneeded. Current law in Ohio already has provisions relating to parental notification and review.

As a parent of trans adult (pronouns ey, em, eirs) who I raised in Ohio, I find this legislation alarming. Students need to develop trusting learning relationships with those who teach them, and who accept them fully. The greatest harm caused to my offspring were teachers who were not accepting of eir gender identity, teachers who wanted to constrain eir expression, teachers who forced em to hide. The greatest educational gift to my offspring were teachers who accepted em fully, and where ey could bring eir full selves/

This bill will not help to keep children safe, but rather will create potentially life-threatening situation for transgender children. As a professor of education who studies the high stakes of classroom relationships, I know that if this bill passes it will place transgender students learning at high risk. If these students cannot bring their full selves into the classroom, risk being "outed" by their teachers/administrators, not only is their mental health at high risk, but also their capacity to learn will be severely compromised.

As a faculty member in an Ohio public university, I have already seen highly talented prospective LGBTQ+ students choose not to attend our institution because of the clear and present danger they see in the Ohio legislature. Is this the kind of state we want to be? I think not. I want to see Ohio be a beacon of creativity, intellectual productivity, and model of human rights. This kind of state will be one where people can flourish and want to raise their families. The proposed legislation threatens such a vision. Please vote no on HB 8 and all legislation that seeks to curtail the rights and education of transgender citizens of Ohio.

Respectfully submitted,

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