

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Annette Frost. I am a citizen of Ohio and have lived here most of my life. I am also a mother of LGBTQ children and I am strongly opposed to House Bill 8.

I have worked in libraries, an elementary school and have volunteered with the Real Mama Bears and Free Mom Hugs movements and PFLAG. I have come to know many LGBTQ people of all ages and heard many stories of their difficulties and struggles in trying just to live their lives truthfully and openly. And having worked with school children and having children of my own, I've learned the importance of children having adults in their lives who are supportive and will listen to children when they need help. According to the Human Rights Campaign, their studies have shown that 43% of transgender youth have been bullied on school property. 29% of transgender youth, 21% of gay and lesbian youth and 22% of bisexual youth have attempted suicide. (<https://www.hrc.org/news/new-cdc-data-shows-lgbtq-youth-are-more-likely-to-be-bullied-than-straight-cisgender-youth>)

These numbers are terrifying and heartbreaking. Many children are not open with their families about their LGBTQ identity because they do not feel safe telling them. We cannot legislate people into becoming understanding and accepting parents. But with this bill we are ensuring that children that don't have accepting parents will have to live in fear every day in their schools. Teachers should be trusted authority figures for schoolchildren, not identity police, and the teachers I know do not want to be put in the position of having to out their students against their will.

I am asking you to advocate for our schoolchildren, who are also your constituents. Let them know that there are adults who can be trusted to protect them and not force them to lie about who they are. It takes a lot of courage to be an LGBTQ person in this world. Our children knew that we were supportive and it was still difficult for them to come out to us. Please don't punish children for something they don't choose and can't change.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this dangerous and patently unAmerican bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to share my story.

Sincerely,
Annette M. Frost