

**Opponent Testimony for HB 8
Senate Education Committee
Monday, December 9, 2024**

**Madison Albring
7th Grade Public School Teacher**

Chair Andrew O. Brenner, Vice Chair Sandra O'Brien, Ranking Member Catherine D. Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for reading my testimony today. My name is Mrs. Madison Albring (she/her) and I am writing to you to share my perspective on this issues as a current public school teacher and involved community member. I am a 7th grade teacher at Swanton Middle School, I have coached volleyball (ages ranging from 10 to 18-year-olds) for 12 seasons (both school and travel), and I spent many years volunteering as both a sunday school teacher and church youth group leader. My life's passion has always been advocating for children and helping them be the best version of themselves. As a teacher, I know how beneficial it is to have parents/guardians on board and to be able to work as a team to help their child be successful. For that reason, I understand the good intentions behind the majority of this bill. However, I am specifically concerned the portion of the bill that defines "student's mental, emotional, or physical health or well-being" as "any request by a student to identify as a gender that does not align with the student's biological sex" specifically in that it requires school employees to notify parents/guardians of the aforementioned student requests.

Last year I had a biologically female student who asked me to refer to them using he/him pronouns. At one point in the year I had a parent-teacher conference with that student's parents. I asked that student how they would like me to refer to him when I met with his parents; I have never seen fear overtake a child's face so quickly. They begged me to use she/her and not to tell his parents that he had asked to be referred to using he/him. He began to cry and explain that they were afraid of what their parents would do if they found out. If HB 8 is passed as is, when I inevitably encounter a similar situation with a future student, this bill would require me to go against that student's wishes and neglect their safety.

In a perfect world, all parents are trying their best and want the best for their children. But unfortunately that is not always the case. While LGBTQIA+ students will not be the only children affected, I fear that this will have a disproportionately negative impact on them. My middle school students are navigating what is arguably the most confusing and difficult stage of life, I beg of you to not make that harder for them by deciding for them whether or not it is safe/when to discuss their choice of pronouns with their parents. Maybe you personally think it wrong for someone to change their pronouns, and you are allowed to believe that. However, please know that his bill will not stop children from feeling the way they do about their won identities, it will only make them feel alone, unsupported, and unsafe. If they feel safe telling their parents, they do that on their own, I have experienced this. Please do not force educators to endanger children.

In conclusion, I am sending you this statement to implore you to not enact such sweeping requirements without thoughtfully considering the effects it will have on individual students who do not have safe adults at home. I ask that you please consider my written testimony and vote no on this bill. Or at the very least, ask for input from educators from all different backgrounds and then amend the bill significantly to ensure you are not asking teachers like me to put my students in harms way. Many teachers will refuse and I fear that this bill could have the additional unintended consequences of adding to the teacher shortage.

Thank you for taking the time to read my statement. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.