

Opponent Testimony for House Bill 8
Senate Education Committee
12/9/2024

Regina L. Shaw
Parent and Concerned Citizen

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien and members of the Ohio Senate Education Committee.

Thank you for allowing me to testify and share my concerns regarding House Bill 8. My name is Regina Shaw. I am a life-long resident of Lancaster, Ohio. As an administrator at our community health care system and the parent of four children, I felt it was my duty to share my concerns with this bill. I strongly oppose the language and intent of this bill and can foresee the harm that this can cause all children not just LGBTQ+. My concern regarding the vague language of 'sexually explicit content' as well as how the language would impact the medical accuracy of sex information.

As someone who has worked in healthcare for over 35 years, as the parent of three adult children and one teenager, and as a board member and advocate for the Harcum House Child Advocacy Center, I have seen firsthand the need and the importance of providing all children sexually accurate information. Many adults either do not know this information or are not comfortable with sharing and communicating this information with their children, hence relying on our schools to do it consistently and accurately. This language harms all children. In addition, you are discrediting the training, education and knowledge of educators, counselors and social workers in our schools, and handcuffing them and making an already difficult job more challenging.

As the mother of a bisexual child, as a friend, sister, aunt and advocate for LGBTQ+ citizens of our state this bill truly frightens me. I work hard to educate and communicate regarding LGBTQ+ issues and concerns and do so with patience, kindness and empathy. To see my family accept my child, sibling and nephew is heartwarming, yet to see their friends be outcasted simply because of who they are and who they love is devastating to watch. Putting legislation in place that forces school staff to "out" someone who is not ready, prepared or even capable of dealing with the potential consequences is what makes our students "Unsafe Students".

I wanted to share my written testimony to support my family and friends, but most of all I am writing on behalf of all students. That they receive medically accurate information, that they have the autonomy to make the decisions that are best for them in their life and that our educators and counselors are able to utilize their training and their skills to compassionately do their jobs.

As politicians, I know you are well meaning, but I ask that you let the experts and professionals do their jobs and allow schools to be safe places to learn and grow.

Thank you,
Regina L. Shaw