

Opponent Testimony for HB 8 - Written-Only
Senate Education Committee
December 10, 2024

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

Thank you for considering my testimony today. My name is Hallie Poor and I use she/her pronouns. I am a licensed independent social worker and sex therapist, born and raised in Akron, Ohio. I attended Catholic grade and high schools in Akron until I attended Ohio University in Athens for undergrad, went to graduate school at the University of Akron, and have now been a community member and resident of Columbus for over four years, where I co-own a psychotherapy practice with a focus on sex, gender, and identity. I am also a bisexual person that is in community with trans and gender nonconforming folks in my family, friend, and professional circles. I am writing to strongly oppose this bill in entirety, however I want to focus specifically on the impact this will have on all students' experiences of shame and the lifelong implications that shame has on a human being's sense of self.

I first want to say that I am so proud of and grateful for the education I've received throughout this state, and I've spent my entire adult life working as a social worker within the mental health community in nonprofit, hospital/health center, and private practice capacities. It is precisely because of the access to information and media that I had, whether it was at home, at my Catholic grade school library, or in college and beyond, that I became curious about the world around me. When I had questions about things that happened to a body as it grows or when learning about developmental milestones through stories in books, including LGBTQ+ stories, my schools and teachers provided answers and resources that helped me orient myself in my environment, which in turn helped me feel more secure and confident in myself.

For many students, under HB 8, these kinds of developmentally normal and common questions that *all* students have would not be able to be answered accessibly or accurately if all curriculum around LGBTQ identities, gender, and sexuality is limited, banned, or challenged. When people have confusion or hear directly from schools, parents, teachers, or administration that there are things about them that are different, wrong, or should not be talked about, this causes shame to form and grow. I invite you to consider how it was for you to grow up and start to have questions about your body, emotions, sex or relationships. Who could you ask? Were you

encouraged or discouraged from asking questions? Were you punished? How do you think that has impacted you?

While I strongly believe as a sex therapist that schools and parents are responsible for fostering developmentally appropriate and safe access to topics of sex and relationships to students, sounding an alarm bell to the parents of kids questioning gender or sexuality regardless of abuse concerns at home and conflating all LGBT inclusive content and curriculum with “sexually explicit content” is inherently harmful and violent. This endangers children, fosters shame around questioning and exploration of identity and relationships, and impacts ALL students, regardless of being LGBTQ+ or not.

As someone that sees every day, in my professional and personal life, the impact that shame around identity can and does have on a person’s sense of confidence, belonging, meaning, and compassion for self and others, I urge you to oppose this bill. Access to accurate and real information and feeling safe at school are rights that should not be taken away from any student in Ohio. I ask that you please consider my testimony and vote no on HB 8.

Thank you for your time. I’m happy to answer any questions.