

Ohio Senate Education Committee  
H.B. 8- Opposition Testimony  
December 10, 2024

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Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee. My name is Tamara Howard, and I serve as Director of Advocacy for the YWCA Columbus. Thank you for the opportunity to provide opposition testimony to H.B. 8.

At YWCA Columbus, our mission is to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. We are dedicated to empowering young girls, including transgender and non-binary youth, and honoring their authentic selves and right to dignity and autonomy.

The proposed bill, despite its proposed intentions, could have devastating effects on LGBTQ+ youth. Its vague language risks conflating LGBTQ+ identities with "sexuality material," leading to harmful misunderstandings. Moreover, the requirement to report health issues to parents could force schools to out children before they are ready, putting them at risk of abuse or eviction. As the bill includes the explicit **requirement for counselors and teachers to out a student** who questions their gender identity or sexual orientation to their parents, without exceptions **even in situations in which there is fear of abuse**, it directly conflicts with mandatory reporter requirements and undermines the safety and privacy of students, and increases risk of eviction.

Imagine a child who feels safe enough to socially transition at school but fears rejection or harm at home. This bill could strip away that safe space, exposing them to potential trauma. We know that LGBTQ+ youth already face high rates of homelessness and mental health challenges. Equality Ohio highlights the severe risks LGBTQ+ youth face, emphasizing that they are 120% more likely to experience homelessness compared to their non-LGBTQ+ peers[1]; [compounding youth vulnerability to mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide](#). This increased risk is often due to family rejection and societal discrimination.

These statistics underscore the urgent need for supportive measures and safe environments for LGBTQ+ youth to prevent homelessness and its associated mental health challenges. Inserting burdensome requirements that force teachers to police their students is not in the best interest of the child. Instead of cultivating a student-teacher relationship based in respect, understanding, and empathy, this bill would require the teacher to act as an untrustworthy authority with the power to potentially devastate a child's home life.

## References

[1] [LGBTQ+ youth would be put at greater risk of homelessness under Ohio ...](#)



The state must protect all children, and that unequivocally should extend to LGBTQ+ children. Schools should be places of learning and support, not environments where students fear being outed or punished for their identities. We urge a "no" vote on this bill to safeguard the dignity and well-being of all children.

Thank you,  
Tamara Howard, Director of Advocacy  
YWCA Columbus

## References

[1] [LGBTQ+ youth would be put at greater risk of homelessness under Ohio ...](#)