



Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in opposition to House Bill 8**. This bill poses significant risks to the well-being of students and educators alike. HB 8 erases LGBTQ+ history and families from school curriculum, places teachers and school administrators in impossible-to-navigate situations, and endangers the mental, emotional, and physical health of LGBTQ+ students.

HB 8 remains a “Don’t Say Gay” bill.

The bill’s reference to “sexuality content” and undefined terms like “gender ideology” invite erasure and censorship. “Gender ideology” is not an academic or legal term; it is a political buzzword. This vague language creates confusion and disproportionately targets LGBTQ+ students and families.

Although lawmakers have claimed adjustments were made to HB 8 based on the Florida settlement of its “Don’t Say Gay” legislation, the ambiguity remains troubling. Allowing “incidental references” outside formal instruction does little to resolve the lack of clarity around what constitutes “classroom instruction” versus “incidental references.” LGBTQ+ identities will inevitably bear the brunt of this harmful policy.

The Florida settlement upholds explicit non-discrimination language that forbids targeting LGBTQ+ persons, couples, families, or issues under the guise of such laws. Why has this basic safeguard not been included in HB 8? The ambiguous criteria in the bill, coupled with high stakes for noncompliance, creates a chilling effect.

As in the wake of Florida’s ‘Don’t Say Gay’ bill, Ohio educators may over-comply to avoid scrutiny, leading to further marginalization of LGBTQ+ students. Already, Ohio schools are grappling with the fallout of rhetoric from bills like HB 8, making this reality impossible to ignore.

HB 8’s forced outing mandate without guidance puts teachers in an untenable position.

The bill’s provision mandating the disclosure of a student’s sexual orientation or gender identity to parents—without clear implementation guidance—places educators in an untenable position.



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While mandatory reporting obligations are crucial, discretion must remain to protect students from harm. The statistics paint a grim picture: LGBTQ+ children face staggering rates of abuse and neglect compared to their peers. [One in four teens is forced out of their home after coming out](#), and more than [40% of homeless LGBTQ+ youth identify as LGBTQ+](#).

These outcomes don't happen in a vacuum—they are direct consequences of policies like those outlined in HB 8. Lawmakers risk exacerbating the very challenges LGBTQ+ youth face, including homelessness and family conflict.

We trust our teachers to be mandatory reporters of abuse and neglect already occurring. We trust our teachers to educate and care for our students for 8 hours a day in the classroom. Mandating that a teacher report knowledge of a child's gender identity, without safeguards or discretion for when that information would *lead to* abuse or neglect of a child, is reckless, and puts our educators in an unimaginable situation.

How did we even get here?

It is worth noting that the provisions targeting the LGBTQ+ community were not part of the original bill—they were added as a political move.

For all young people, figuring out who they are is a deeply personal journey. For transgender youth in particular, coming out is a profoundly personal decision that should occur on their own terms, in their own time, and in safe circumstances—not under the direction of lawmakers.

LGBTQ+ students deserve environments that celebrate their identities, ensure their safety, and reflect their experiences. The history of our community deserves to be taught, and Ohio students deserve to see themselves reflected in what we teach in our schools.

Thank you for your time and attention. I urge the committee to oppose HB 8 and consider the harmful impacts this legislation would have on LGBTQ+ students, families, and educators. I welcome the opportunity to address any further questions you may have.