

Jeanne Ogden

Opposition Testimony – HB 8

Ohio Senate Education Committee

12/10/24

Hello Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, and Ranking Member Ingram. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 8.

Most of you know me. I've been here before. I have been here week after week for the last three years, sharing my family's story with you and begging you not to take my child and my family's rights away. I've explained how sitting on edge, never knowing when the next bill will be introduced or when I'll have to be here, again, causes deep and indelible harm to me and my daughter.

I have worried about my daughter, whose mental health and physical well being have suffered at having to listen to people debate her right to healthcare and safety, her right to simply exist in public spaces. I have sat with dozens of families in our Community Care room, hugged and fed them as lawmakers and witnesses have called them perverted, told them that simply asking for the right to exist in the public sphere is too much. For anyone interested in knowing how they are doing, their pale, drawn faces and tears are easy proof that the legislation you keep pushing is taking a toll.

You have seen them, standing before you, over and over, all of them saying the same thing.

Please. Stop.

Just stop.

You won't. I know that. You have made your position clear: the pain we are feeling is because we are persisting in misguided lives that will only bring physical and emotional pain, perhaps eternal. Some of you have transgender children, nieces, and nephews or siblings and you say they are the ones tearing your families apart. You say "gender ideology" has destroyed them.

I am here to tell you that you are wrong. You are tearing your families and our families and whole communities apart with your intolerance and hellbent determination to erase us from public view for fear that more will follow us down the "dark path."

It took me a while to understand and accept my transgender daughter. I regret that, because once we made the smallest effort to understand, opened ourselves up to the possibility that gender is

not binary for everyone, we have never been closer. As a family, we share joy, celebrate holidays and milestones, and support each other in difficult times. We love each other, and I mourn for those of you listening who are missing out on relationships with your transgender family members and friends. They will move on without you.

To transgender children, adults, and their families, it is not your fault.

It's not your fault that your family is broken.

Republicans say they are for family and parental rights.

HB 8 sets my family apart, my child apart, as being too dangerous and confusing to talk about in schools. Sure, you have made the magnanimous gesture of allowing us and our children to be mentioned "incidentally" but not worthy of inclusion at all levels of curriculum. We exist. We are here. We are happy. We are not perverted or doomed. That is our belief and our lived experience.

The foundational discussions of families and relationships set the stage for a lifetime of love, self-worth, respect, and belonging. It tells kids they are ok. That their family is ok. It cuts the chains of generational trauma. You don't fight for all families' rights.

You fight for your own family and the need to hold yourselves up as the pinnacle of worth for everyone else. By erasing us from curriculums from K-3 and restricting lessons in grades 4 – 12, you tell every single one of us that we are "less than."

You have taken our children's healthcare away.

You have taken their social connection by banning even the smallest players from sports.

You have taken their equal access to bathrooms away.

Now, you want to make exploring the beauty in all families illegal.

Illegal.

We are not less than. We are beautiful.

#HB8 is hate.

Please, VOTE NO.

Thank you.

