

Hello,

I'm reaching out to state that I strongly oppose the passage of H.B. 8 for a number of reasons. On a professional level, as a social worker who works with youth ages 12-24, many of whom are LGBT+, I have first hand seen the negative outcomes of a student being outed to their family against their will. In many instances, if a young person is not sharing aspects of themselves with their parent/guardian, this is done out of safety and self preservation.

Putting educators in a position where they must out their students as being LGBT+ despite the fact that it may directly lead to that young person being abused at home is unethical and unfounded. Youth are autonomous beings and deserve the right to disclose what information to who on their own terms.

Additionally, this bill is complicating the already complex responsibilities of educators in our state. Our teachers are already juggling the tasks of educating our youth, maintaining a safe classroom, and acting as mentors and leaders in our community. This bill would add more layers to sift through to meet these goals. We should be able to trust our educators to decide what information they teach to our youth. LGBT+ history is US history, and to ignore that aspect of our history is to ignore a rich and vibrant thread to be proud of in US culture.

On a more personal level, I can't help but imagine how this bill would have affected me when I was a student. As a trans student I already felt alienated and isolated during my school years, and while I hardly saw any LGBT+ representation in the classroom, I was never put in a position where myself and my peers were needing permission slips signed in order to even speak of LGBT+ people and topics.

In all, while this bill surely aims to protect Ohio youth, it truly only targets the most vulnerable, others them, and puts them at unwarranted risk.

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