

Testimony of Scott Sibley on Ohio H.B. 8
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I missed the deadline to testify about the recently signed SB 104. Fortunately, or I should say unfortunately, it didn't take long for another need to stand up for the dignity and safety of Ohio's transgender children. Why does this legislature have it in for vulnerable transgender Ohio youth? Its like you've made it your number one mission. Are there no real problems that need tending to in Ohio?

I noticed that the first section of HB 8 affirms the general assembly's opinion that parents have a fundamental right to make decisions concerning the care of their children. Apparently, this right does not extend to medical decisions regarding gender affirming care. But that was last year's assault on transgender youth.

HB 8 purports to be about parents' rights to know what their children are learning about sex in school and about their observed health and well-being in school. Most of the bill's short text contains fairly innocuous directives to this effect, which are probably in line with most school districts current policies (teaching age-appropriate material, bringing concerns about a student to the attention of parents, such as academics, sickness, injuries, bullying, and suicidal tendencies). But couched within the text and definitions is a strangely specific directive that schools and its employees are required to notify parents if a student requests to "identify as a gender that does not align with the student's biological sex."

Presumably, this requirement would be in effect whether the request was made directly to a school employee or if the employee overheard or was told of the request by someone else. And presumably it would be in effect whether or not the student requested that their parents not be told for fear of retribution or rejection or just because the student did not want them to know or was not yet ready to tell them. What does this have to do with a student's health and well-being? On the contrary, isn't it obvious how this requirement could be detrimental to the student's health and well-being? There are bound to be very real circumstances where a child with gender dysphoria is fearful of letting their parents know but that child would still like to be themselves at school for their own well-being. Hopefully, these situations would be rare, but then, why does our legislature want to single out the very small percentage of children with gender dysphoria and put them through this? Does this bill further the health and well-being of children? Does it further the trust and candor between student and teacher?

