



Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Senators Lang and McColley:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong opposition to House Bill 68. I regret that I am unable to join you in Columbus today for this hearing. My name is Dr. Ben Huelskamp and I serve as the Executive Director of LOVEboldly, an Ohio faith-based nonprofit working to create and develop spaces where LGBTQIA+ people can flourish in Christianity. I was born, raised, and educated through high school in Ohio and have always considered myself a proud son of Ohio.

Senators, much ink has been spilled arguing for and against HB68. It is a hotly debated topic for which there is significant and passionate discourse. My colleagues from Equality Ohio, TransOhio, Trans Allies of Ohio, the ACLU of Ohio, Kaleidoscope Youth Center, Equitas Health, Nationwide Children's Hospital, Cleveland Clinic Children's, Cincinnati Children's Hospital, and the Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics have and will continue today to offer you significant legal, medical, scientific, and ethical evidence, perspective, and advice for why HB68 is bad for Ohio and Ohioans. For my part, I'd like to present you with arguments from four perspectives: consensus, history, faith, and home.

First, there is broad opposition to HB68. As I write this testimony, there are already 90 other opponents who have submitted testimony listed on the General Assembly's website for this hearing alone compared to the 19 proponents who submitted testimony for your hearing on November 28, 2023. [An article published in *The Buckeye Flame*](#) demonstrated how at least five of the witnesses who testified or submitted testimony for the November 28 hearing are from out-of-state and have testified in support of similar bills in other states. In addition to the Ohio organizations I listed above, opposition to HB68 has been offered by major trade and professional unions, faith organizations, primary and secondary schools, institutions of higher education, and many others. This bill is not wanted by the people of Ohio.

Second, HB68 stands on the wrong side of history. While history will judge each of us for our actions, it will also judge our inactions and the times we passively consented to measures and situations in opposition to our ethical lights and basic decency. At the time many people in the United States applauded the actions of George Wallace literally blocking doors to the University of Alabama against integration, but history now uses him as fodder for every figurative and literal depiction of government exclusion towards marginalized communities. How will history remember you and how will history remember Ohio?

Third, as a Christian, my faith compels me to act for justice. My faith tradition teaches that we are each created in the image of God. When we marginalize one person, we marginalize all people and we marginalize God. HB68 has numerous medical and scientific points which warrant the careful consideration that numerous reputable practitioners and researchers have offered in their opposition testimony since HB68 was first introduced in the House. Yet, HB68 is ultimately about justice and access. Access to established, evidence-based care for transgender minors and adults. Access to restrooms, locker rooms, changing rooms, and overnight accommodations matching the

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gender identity of transgender students and adults. HB68 is about the justice for transgender people not only in Ohio, but anyone traveling to and through our state. Opposing this bill sends a strong message that in Ohio we embrace and honor every one of our citizens and residents in the diversity of their creation.

Fourth, Ohio is home. As I said in my opening, I was born in Columbus, raised and educated in Cambridge and Zanesville, spent summers on Kelley's Island, and visited family in Springfield, New Riegel, Wauseon, Fort Recovery, and elsewhere around the state. My parents as well as my sister, brother-in-law, and nephew now live in Urbana. I now live and work in Westerville and attend seminary in Delaware. Ohio is my home. An unfortunate and troubling consequence of passing HB68 will be the exodus of Transgender people and people with Transgender children from the State of Ohio. Friends of mine, both Transgender and the parents of Transgender youth, have emergency plans in place to seek legal, medical, and social refuge in states with affirming and inclusive laws should HB68 become law. Ohio is their home as much as it is my home or your home. I urge you to recognize the probable outcomes of HB68 and its real impact on Ohioans and their families.

Proverbs 27:19 tells us that just as water reflects our faces, so does our life reflect what is in our hearts. Regardless of our opinions on policy, I trust that as Ohio Senators you want what is best for all Ohioans. Weighing the consensus of opposition; the serious legal, medical, psychological, and scientific objections; the moral implications; and the consequences of displacing Ohioans from their home, I urge you to reject HB68 now and give your support to Transgender Ohioans of all ages and their families, friends, and communities.

Respectfully submitted,

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