

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee

Hello, my name is Alexander Stone and I am a Senior at Wright State University. I am majoring in Biomedical Engineering and working to get my Bachelors and Masters at the same time, with a focus in Medical Imaging. I am also very active on my campus. I am a part of the WSU iGEM team, which is an international Synthetic Biology competition. I participate as a member of many of the university's student orgs and am President of the Rainbow Alliance.

I have always been an incredibly motivated student. In highschool I was a part of Student Government, serving as president my senior year. I served as a member of the Shelby County Student United Way, was elected as captain of my soccer, basketball, and track team, all while working on weekends and over the summer. I was inducted as a member of the National Honor Society and even graduated Valedictorian of my class.

And yet all this motivation and drive came from a place of such pain. I came from a home where I did not feel safe. My parents were emotionally, and sometimes physically, abusive. I spent so much time at school and work because those things kept me out of the house and gave me a small amount of freedom to be myself. I threw myself into school, and sports, and work, and clubs because they helped distract me from the pain I was experiencing. By senior year it was all coming to a breaking point. Either I would graduate, go to college, and escape, or I would crumble under the weight of it all.

For me, college was the light at the end of the tunnel. It was my escape from the closed off, abusive world I had been subjected to my whole life. It was my chance to finally meet people who wouldn't report me to my parents. It was my chance to listen to music or watch tv shows without having to constantly look over my shoulder. It was my chance to figure out who I was, not just who my parents wanted me to be. Without that light, without the beautiful, shining chance at escape, I would have had no hope, and I would not be here today.

As a queer student with quite a lot of childhood trauma, it's very important for me to be able to connect with people who have shared life experiences with me. The feeling of extreme isolation I experienced as a child is horrific, and I would not wish that on my worst enemy. Feeling alone in this world leaves a person to believe that they must achieve everything on their own, that they will never be stable, and that life is a series of painful experiences over and over until they die. It is a tragedy that anyone would feel isolated, because the feeling of a strong support system is so comforting.

The support system I have now is one I built through many of the student orgs available at Wright State. I'm eternally grateful to the students and faculty who, in the early 1990's,

created the Rainbow Alliance which I am responsible for today. Their work, and the work of the students and advisors who followed them, has directly benefited my life. For students like myself, who have to go out of our way to find community, these student orgs and gathering places are vital to our existence.

I've read through the bill being discussed here today, multiple times. I've looked it over with a lawyer through the Student Legal Services department at Wright State and worked with her to make a summary for my fellow students. I've been educating and raising awareness for this bill everywhere I go. My purpose here today is not to talk about why this bill is harmful *legally*, or *financially*, or *culturally*; I'm sure there are plenty of people paid way more than me who will do that. I'm here to tell you all why this bill is harmful *personally* to the students, from a student's perspective. I'm here to tell you today that if this bill were in place while I was in high school, I would have had the light at the end of the tunnel to give me hope in an abusive situation.

I can now take any questions you may have.