



To the Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing in strong opposition to House Bill 249, the “Indecent Exposure Modernization Act.”

This bill creates a new criminal offense called “unlawful adult cabaret performance.” It defines such a performance—in locations where minors may be present—as one that is “harmful to juveniles or obscene” and features, among other things, “performers or entertainers who exhibit a gender identity that is different from the performer’s or entertainer’s biological sex using clothing, makeup, prosthetic or imitation genitals or breasts, or other physical markers.”

As a trans woman living openly in Ohio and someone who regularly serves as a public speaker, I am deeply concerned that this language directly targets people like me. It equates exhibiting a gender identity consistent with who we are—through everyday clothing, appearance, or presentation—with obscenity or harm to juveniles. This could criminalize trans individuals simply for appearing in public, attending family-friendly events, or participating in community activities in ways that align with our gender identity. It risks turning misdemeanors into felonies based on subjective judgments about what is “obscene” or “harmful.”

The bill’s vague definitions create additional uncertainty. It is unclear whether a trans person like myself—exhibiting “a gender identity different from their biological sex using clothing, makeup, prosthetic or imitation genitals or breasts, or other physical markers”—who is simply engaging in public speaking could be deemed an “entertainer” under this bill and therefore subject to prosecution. Public speaking is a protected form of expression, yet the broad language leaves ordinary Ohioans guessing whether they might face criminal charges.

Ohio already has clear, longstanding laws against public indecency and material harmful to juveniles that protect children without broadly restricting protected expression. This bill is unnecessary overreach that violates First Amendment rights to free speech and artistic expression.

Sponsor Representative Angie King has cited “provocative” dancing, “twerking, and gyrating” in skimpy outfits at a public event as the inspiration for this legislation. Yet these same types of dance moves are commonplace at any Friday night high school football cheerleading routine—often with even less clothing—and at gymnastics meets or dance competitions, where minors themselves are frequently performing. There has been no effort to criminalize those activities.

Likewise, sponsor Angie King has said that this bill would not apply to things like theatre productions of Mrs. Doubtfire or local events where men dress as women or nuns or other similar events for charity. If that is the case, where is the line drawn? Is it only when LGBTQ+ people do it?



The bill's vague and broad definitions invite selective enforcement, self-censorship, and fear. Drag shows and inclusive performances support local economies through ticket sales, venue revenue, and tourism—benefits Ohio communities enjoy without any proven harm to minors.

As someone who navigates daily life as a trans woman in this state, I have seen how legislation like this increases stigma, harassment, and division rather than addressing real safety concerns. It makes trans Ohioans feel unwelcome and targeted in our own communities.

I respectfully urge the House Judiciary Committee to reject HB 249. It is discriminatory, likely unconstitutional, and diverts focus from priorities that truly support Ohio families, such as education, healthcare, and economic opportunity.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I oppose House Bill 249 and ask that it not advance.

Sincerely,
Arienne Childrey