

I oppose the passing of H.B. 249 which seeks to ban drag performances in the state of Ohio.

I am a theatre artist and this bill passing means that Shakespeare cannot be performed in the state of Ohio, when Shakespeare is taught in most schools and Shakespearean companies bring in lots of money to the cities from which they perform in. Historically, men have portrayed women in Shakespeare going back centuries in Western Europe, and the first woman to portray a female character in a Shakespeare play was in the 17th century. So, if this bill passes, you are not only depriving the general public of classic literature, you are also depriving students of a decent education in the English language, depriving theatre companies of productions, depriving theatre professionals of paid work, and depriving communities of cultural events that give people reasons to go to a new restaurant, check out a new part of town, and enjoy their city more. Do you really want to kill tourism?

As a cisgender person, I am not offended nor feel compromised of my identity seeing a drag show. I usually appreciate the talent and support them with my dollar bills. I found out that a drag performer is a paid performer, as often is the case, their performance determines whether they can eat, have a roof over their heads, and get to where they need to get to. I love drag. Drag shows are money makers. They bring in more money to the bars, restaurants, coffee shops, parks, and theatres that often host them. Do you really want to kill a wise business move?

As a U.S. citizen, this ban violates the First Amendment. Bills like this have been struck down in Montana, Florida, Tennessee, and Florida because they are unconstitutional. This could broadly criminalize protected speech that not even those favored by the federal government would be allowed to be on a stage by the criminality this bill will ensue if passed. Do you really want to kill free speech?

As a constituent of the state of Ohio, I urge you to stop wasting taxpayer money on this. I also encourage you to take in a drag show and a theatre performance. What you fear is what you refuse to see. Do you know what you are demonizing?