



March 18, 2026

## Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 249

Chair Thomas, vice chair Swearingen, ranking member Synenberg, and members of the Ohio House Judiciary committee, my name is Douglas Berger, and I am president of the Secular Humanists of Western Lake Erie based in Toledo and we oppose House Bill 249.

We support the 1st amendment and HB 249 surely violates the 1st amendment rights of drag performers.

The bill is based on the subjective religious bias that all drag is obscene which is not supported in the history of law or drag shows. For example, a similar bill was ruled unconstitutional in Tennessee. Shakespeare had women in his works played by men back in his time. The vague language in this proposed bill would make Shakespeare a criminal. And as a side note I need to point out that, currently, women can be topless in public, and it is not a crime.

**Drag performers are professional and they often tailor performances for their audience.** For many years, drag performers have been on a public stage in Promenade Park in downtown Toledo and there have been children present and nothing I've seen could even be thought to be obscene.

There have not been incidents where children are "exposed" to "obscene" drag shows.

We know why Representatives King and Williams introduced this bill. We must stop basing state law on religious beliefs because it harms people and violates all our civil rights. It singles out and excludes a particular class of people based on fear and not facts.

There are other, more pressing issues to address in the legislature, like affordability, and policing drag shows is not one of them.

**Please reject House Bill 249**

Douglas Berger – President

Secular Humanists of Western Lake Erie