

My name is Olivia Kozlowski, I am a 23 year old college student who was proudly born and raised in Northeast Ohio. I have been a singer and theatrical performer my entire life, and for the past four years I have been performing as a professional drag queen by the name of Monica Mod. I have performed all over the state for many different audiences of all backgrounds and ages. I am a live singer as well as a dancer who performs to Broadway and pop music for people to sing along to and enjoy, just like they would at a concert seeing their favorite musician. The art of drag is not inherently sexual, nor is it a danger to any child or adult. Drag is an art form of expression that allows me to not only share my love of theatricality, but to also share my love for what drag has to offer to the audiences at my shows.

I cannot tell you the amount of people, adults and children alike, who have told me the importance of my shows and what my presence and performances mean to them. I teach lessons in accepting those who may appear different from others, encouraging self expression, and most of all, allowing people of all ages to have a space to be who they are without judgement or fear. In a state like Ohio where these community gatherings may be harder to come by, I find it to be incredibly important to continue my work as a family friendly drag queen to share these important lessons of empathy and self love with others, but I cannot do that if this bill goes into effect.

The most absurd aspect of this bill, to me, is the verbiage used to describe the people this bill targets. For context, I was born female and identify as a cisgender woman, meaning that I identify as the gender I was born as - female. I was born a woman and live as a woman; I am not transgender nor have I ever considered being a gender other than female. This bill states on page 7, lines 162 to 165, that “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” would be targeted. Based on this verbiage, me being a female-born drag queen would not be breaking any rules or laws if I were to perform in the spaces that are outlined. I am just a woman, dressing as a woman with over-exaggerated makeup and wigs. This alone proves that this bill uses verbiage that is far too vague, which can be used against groups of people who look different from what others expect based on their gender. This poses as a danger to MANY people, even people that don't identify as gay or transgender who simply dress in a way that doesn't fit the societal standards of their gender. This bill deliberately targets and prohibits the freedom of expression that is protected under the First Amendment of the constitution, a reason why similar bills such as the “Protection of Children Act” (HB1423) in Florida and South Dakota's House Bills 1116 and 1125 did not pass in their respective states.

In addition to the personal aspects of this bill that I strongly oppose, there is an economic aspect that should be taken into consideration in opposing this bill. There have been dozens of venues I have performed at in the past, including bars, restaurants, and community theaters, with no adult cabaret licenses. These drag shows help support local Ohio businesses by bringing in additional revenue through ticket sales for shows as well as the increased support from patrons that come to these events for drag and stay to support the business itself. Taking away the ability to host drag shows at these venues will hurt these businesses financially, therefore

creating an economic impact against the entire state. Livelihoods would be affected or lost for not just drag performers, but for business owners and theatrical performers as well.

Continuing to support this bill simply wastes time and taxpayer money on efforts that could be spent on issues that are proven to negatively impact Ohio children. Countless livelihoods will be hurt and impacted by this bill if it goes into effect, including business owners, theater owners, theater participants who are transgender, anyone who dresses or presents themselves in a way that does not align with their gender identity they were born as (transgender or not), and of course drag queens who depend on not just the work that these shows provide, but the support of the community and being able to give back through our art. It is in the best interest of the House of Representatives to oppose HB 249 and put their focus into efforts that will truly improve the lives of Ohioans.

Sincerely,

Olivia Kozlowski / Monica Mod