

Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Faye. I am a teacher at the Ohio State University, I provide child care services for the North Columbus Quaker Meeting, and I volunteer my time at Kaleidoscope Youth Center, running roleplaying games for the young people there. I am also a trans woman.

I am here because although there are many reprehensible aspects of the Bill being discussed today, there is one section that especially frightens me, and many others. That is section 4(a), which specifies as “adult cabaret” any “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.”

I believe the language here is dangerously vague. This language essentially means that I could be charged with a felony for playing Dungeons and Dragons with teenagers at a Youth Center, or providing child care for my Church. Even my job teaching undergraduates at OSU occasionally includes students taking college classes while still in high school, and teaching English 1110 could be construed as “adult cabaret” under the language of this Bill, since these activities involve “entertainment” and “performance” and I am exhibiting a gender identity that is different from the gender I was assigned at birth while performing them.

In no way am I harming children through this work. There is certainly no sexual material involved. I dress for these roles more or less as I come before you now. I am simply a woman doing my job. My gender identity in these spaces is a non-issue. Yet this Bill would make it a crime.

To my fellow trans and genderqueer people, we know that House Bill 249, at its heart, arises from a profound depth of ignorance. Specifically, it conflates all non-standard expressions of gender identity with sexuality and sexually explicit entertainment. But this is simply not true. To the committee: you do not need to understand every person in your district. But just because you don't understand someone, that does not mean they are harming anyone.

Members of the Committee: I am a performer and entertainer for both adults and young people. I also live as a transgender woman. My transness and my gender identity, however, are not a performance. They are not entertainment. Transness has become conflated with sexuality because trans bodies have been fetishized, largely by those who fear us. But my sexuality is unrelated to my work.

But I and my fellow trans people know that this doesn't matter to the writers of HB 249. They simply seek to ban and criminalize all public expressions of gender they don't understand.

And of course, I am not the only trans or gender nonconforming person who works in spaces that require public performance. I ask you to consider the effects of this Bill on musicians, actors, teachers, artists, activists, poets, leaders, indeed, anyone who does work that involves an audience. All of us could be criminalized, regardless of the actual content and context of our work, simply for existing as ourselves.

Please vote no on House Bill 249. Thank you.