

To the Honorable members of the Ohio House of Representatives,

I am here to ask you: please reject House Bill 249.

This legislation could cause great harm to the citizens you have been elected to represent.

This piece of legislation could be used not only to criminalize a form of entertainment that has existed for hundreds and hundreds of years, but also be used to harm people outside of these performances. This legislation could easily be willfully misinterpreted and be used to harass people who do not conform to specific visual expectations of gender or sex, regardless of their actual status.

Other states - Montana, Texas, and Florida - have already been blocked from implementing laws like this, as they are overly vague in definition and are in violation of our first amendment rights to freedom of expression. Performance art such as Music, Dance, Comedy, and Theater are protected under that First Amendment. Drag entertainment is a combination of all of these things, so why should it be singled out for criminalization?

Additionally, the consequences proposed under this law are extremely harsh; a 1st degree misdemeanor or possible felony for entertainment? Why are these consequences more harsh than those faced by actual perpetrators of child abuse? Why such a concern for theater, when there are still religious exemptions to child abuse laws, and there is so much evidence for child abuse within religious institutions? It is clear that there is a bias and prejudice behind the drafting of this legislation, not truly a care for the welfare of children.

The Drag community is not here to harm children. We want the next generation of humanity to be safe, healthy and happy, and to be accepted for whoever they grow up to be.

Thank you for your time.

Sam Karpman as Axel Grease, a Drag King from Columbus, Ohio