

I would like to start by focusing on how this bill defines the performers and people it seeks to erase.

Language listed in the bill states, “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”.

The bill would impact professional and hobby-based artists across multiple performing mediums, transgender people engaging in daily life, and even cisgender people whose choice in dress does not adhere to perceived gender norms.

This language is a clear attack on drag performers, an artform with a long and rich history woven into queer culture. It’s no secret members of this committee have been pushing legislature to erase queer people from existing publicly for years. This bill is just another attempt to create a less diverse and more close minded society.

In addition to drag entertainers, the language of this bill would consider many pieces of live theatre to be in violation. Shows like Hairspray, Mrs Doubtfire, and essentially any traditionally performed Shakespear play would no longer have a place on Ohio’s public stages.

Art is the heart of a society. And Ohio will feel an immeasurable loss should this bill pass. It is not lost on me the irony of our official state slogan, “Ohio, the heart of it all,” a slogan rooted in an assertion that community is important, essential. How can we proudly display this slogan while seeking to silence members of our own community. Ohio’s artists are important to our economy as well. According to a study conducted and published by Creative Ohio in 2024, “Ohio’s creative sector is a major economic force, directly contributing \$32.9 billion annually, supporting over 132,000 jobs, and driving

\$923 million in state and local tax revenue. When factoring in indirect and induced impacts, that number grows to \$63.3 billion and nearly 292,000 jobs.

Additionally, this bill is an attack on transgender people's existence, yet another marginalized group legislators are supposed to represent, and yet would rather spend valuable time trying to rid the communities they serve of their own constituents. Each time I stand before this committee I ask you to remember that when you took this job, you signed up to represent the people, not just the ones you agree with, or the ones you deem worthy of public life.