

Sedona McQueen
Regarding HB249
3/16/26

My name is Sedona McQueen. I'm a drag king, and I'm testifying against House Bill 249. I am highly concerned and disturbed by the contents of this bill, a bill founded on lies, fearmongering, and hatred.

My community of fellow drag performers are some of the honest, kindest, most community oriented people I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. These are real people, community leaders and beacons of hope. They have feelings, opinions, lives, bills, and taxes to pay. Citizens of Ohio, just like you, that you are accused of being "harmful to juveniles." Drag as an art form has existed for hundreds of years across the world, performed in a variety of different ways. This form of art has allowed myself and countless others to express ourselves and our queer joy through performance art. It has appeared in theater, television, music videos, and more. It can be comedic, political, glamorous, heartfelt, and so much more. And not all drag is strictly crossdressing: some entertainers perform an exaggerated performance of the same gender they were assigned at birth. It's just another form of performance. What basis do you have to accuse drag of being harmful to minors? What quantifiable evidence can you provide? Does queer expression unsettle you so much that you must weaponize a vulnerable audience to subjugate our expression to the shadows? Must you weaponize our art as a threat, when school shootings and youth group leaders in churches provide an exponentially larger threat to children than drag ever could?

I am not only a drag performer, but a citizen of Portage County. As a resident of Portage County (and of Ohio) I can say with confidence that there are more pressing issues to address that would benefit the citizens of Ohio, instead of restricting an art form. There are seven potholes on my street alone. We are thirty sixth in education. Dayton and Cincinnati have some of the worst drug problems in our state. These are only three examples of more dire issues that our state government should be handling instead of restricting the free speech of LGBTQ+ individuals. Not only that, but this bill is redundant. Minors are already protected from obscene performances under current Ohio law. Sections 2907.31, 2907.311, 2907.321 (specifically 6) and 2907.323 protect minors from viewing or being involved in obscene/sexual performances. Furthermore, this bill can (and will) encompass forms of expression completely unrelated to drag such as cultural attire (i.e kilts) as well as transgender people dressing in ways that affirm their identity.

In the end, this narrative of protecting minors from "obscene" drag performers is pure fearmongering and blatantly ignores the laws currently in place to protect minors from viewing obscene acts. The only purpose this narrative serves to do is suppress, and erase queer art and expression. It is a violation of the First Amendment, and blatantly prejudiced. As a member of

the drag community of northeastern Ohio, there are exactly zero adult oriented drag performances that happen in spaces where minors would be present. This bill is vague, misinformed, and a violation of our right to free speech. The writers and proponents of this bill know nothing about the art of drag and its nuances. They have never once spoken to an actual drag performer. Enacting this oppressive bill would put the livelihoods of LGBTQ+ Ohioans in jeopardy. I thank the committee for taking the time to hear my testimony and I hope and pray that you will reject HB 249.

To quote Herman Melville's classic novel *Moby Dick*: "see how elastic our stiff prejudices grow once love comes to bend them." Thank you.