

Dear Mr. Chairman and Esteemed Committee Members,

I am writing in strong opposition of HB249. As a family scientist and marriage and family therapist, I deeply understand the challenges that families face daily, including navigating their children's potential exposure to inappropriate sexual content. However, exposure to drag performances or to people existing in makeup and clothing outside the norms of their gender assigned at birth is not one of these challenges.

First and foremost, "gender-bending" performances and existences are not inherently sexual, as gender identity and sexual identity are completely separate. As long as private areas are covered, drag performers and transgender people are truly just people wearing clothes. The ways in which they choose to exaggerate or modify their appearance are no different than the piercings, tattoos, and breast implants or reductions that cisgender people obtain every day with no opposition to their proximity to children.

Additionally, drag has been a common form of art and entertainment for centuries. It is not limited to "adult cabaret" venues and, in fact, has been a staple of mainstream, family-friendly entertainment. William Shakespeare commonly had men play female characters, with the practice maintaining popularity among stage performances before and after women were legally able to perform onstage. Even *White Christmas*, deemed a classic family-friendly holiday film, features a scene in which the main characters perform a song in drag. Why, in 2026, is this form of art suddenly inappropriate for children to see?

Finally, this bill makes little legal sense. Aside from being a blatant disregard of first amendment rights to freedom of expression and artistic performance, the bill's language is so broad that it could be applied to common cultural clothing such as kilts or to cisgender women who wear suits. Similar bills in Montana, Tennessee, and Florida have all been blocked for these very reasons, as has a nearly identical bill in Ohio (HB245). Opposition to bills like this has been made clear both state and nationwide.

For these reasons, I implore you to vote no on HB249.

Respectfully,

Renee Shirrell, MS, MFT