

My name is Patty McAvoy. I was born and raised in Columbus, Ohio and I am providing my testimony in opposition of HB 249. I fully support the art of drag and the amazing community of drag artists that we are lucky to have here in Central Ohio.

Drag is not just performance—it is survival, storytelling, and liberation. It creates a space where people, especially queer individuals, can exist fully and safely as themselves. In a world that can still be unwelcoming or even hostile, drag offers something rare and vital: a community built on acceptance, celebration, and authenticity. It is a safe and critically important space where people can explore identity, find belonging, and feel seen.

What has struck me most is the immense amount of work that goes into it. Drag queens pour countless hours into their craft—designing looks, perfecting makeup, rehearsing performances—often, all while navigating difficult circumstances, whether that be financial strain, discrimination, or lack of support. Their dedication is nothing short of extraordinary. Behind every performance is resilience, discipline, and an unwavering commitment to their art.

Despite these challenges, the drag community continues to give back in powerful ways. In Columbus, the generosity of drag performers and their supporters is truly remarkable. Together, they have raised millions of dollars for the Central Ohio community, supporting causes that uplift and protect some of the most vulnerable. That spirit of giving speaks volumes about what drag really represents: compassion, solidarity, and care for others.

Drag also saves lives. It provides hope, visibility, and a reminder that there is nothing wrong with being who you are. For many, it is a lifeline—a place where joy and self-worth can be rediscovered and nurtured. Watching and engaging with drag has inspired me to embrace more of myself, to live more boldly, and to appreciate the power of chosen family and creative expression.

Most importantly, drag is safe and not a threat to society. At its core, it is about creativity, performance, and self-expression—values that enrich culture rather than harm it. Drag fosters empathy, challenges rigid norms, and encourages people to think more openly about identity and individuality. It brings people together, builds community, and celebrates diversity in a way that strengthens, rather than divides.

It is critically important that we, as a community, protect and uplift these spaces and the people within them. The art of drag matters because it empowers, heals, and connects. It is not just art—it is a vital force for community, identity, and survival.

Thank you very much for hearing my testimony in opposition of HB 249 and in support of our amazing drag community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patty McAvoy', written in a cursive style.

Patty McAvoy