

Dear Chair Thomas, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Synenberg, and fellow respected Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to express my thoughts regarding HB 249. I am reaching out to urge you to oppose HB 249 on the grounds that it infringes upon the first amendment right to free speech, it's a waste of time and taxpayer money, and quite frankly it's a ridiculous distraction from things that are real problems plaguing Ohio's children. There are other issues I'd rather my tax dollars and the attention of my representatives be allocated to that are ACTUAL threats to child safety.

Point one: HB 249 infringes upon the first amendment right to free speech.

- The bill uses vague language allowing for persecution of women and men (protected under the 14th amendment) who are neither transgender nor drag artists. People who could be charged with felonies for simply existing in public include performing artists, people with androgynous work uniforms, women with short hair or who've had lifesaving medical care such as mastectomies/hysterectomies/chemo/etc. that leave their bodies looking more androgynous, men in cultural wear such as kilts or thobes, people dressing up at comic book conventions or halloween parties, WWE wrestlers, and more.
- Bills like HB 249 have already been struck down as unconstitutional on the grounds of infringing the first amendment freedom of speech. Montana has had similar laws deemed unconstitutional. Yet Ohio is still wasting taxpayer money on this.
- This bill harms many people, as anyone perceived as performing gender in a way that someone doesn't like or understand can be persecuted under this bill. I have personal experience:
  - I was a tomboy my whole childhood. Now as an adult, I have people constantly question whether I am a transgender woman who's changing from male to female. I'm not, but because I have a more muscular/stocky build, I don't shave my legs, and I have a mid-lower range voice, some people get confused and assume I'm faking femininity. It's gotten significantly more dangerous for me to exist in public with the rise of this weird anti-drag/anti-trans rhetoric. I like to dress more masculine than feminine the majority of the time. It's comfortable. Sometimes though, I do like dresses, skirts, and makeup. Being confused for someone who's transitioning has happened most often when I'm wearing feminine clothing, meaning when I'm presenting as the sex I was assigned at birth, people often think I'm cross-dressing. It doesn't bother me because there is nothing wrong with being transgender and there's nothing wrong with performing drag. Neither of those harm people. I exist outside of binary gender and people react to me according to their personal perception. The increased legal and cultural persecution of transgender people and drag artists over the last decade has directly led to me being stalked, sexually harassed, beaten, threatened with guns, screamed at, and nearly murdered (all way more than once, and once is too many times). All because people acted out of a politically manufactured fear

and confusion that had nothing to do with me. There is no way to discern who is or isn't in drag, or who is or isn't transgender. People decide what gender they think I am based on their individual biases. I've had people assume I'm male on the exact same day wearing the exact same outfit as I've had people assume I'm female. And I'm not the only person this happens to.

Point two: HB 249 is a waste of everyone's time and taxpayer money on a nonissue.

- Ohio already has active, enforceable obscenity laws.
- People who are simply existing in public will be wrongfully targeted and harmed, and those people will sue. That is a waste of our money.
- Drag isn't inherently obscene. Here are some examples of drag performers:

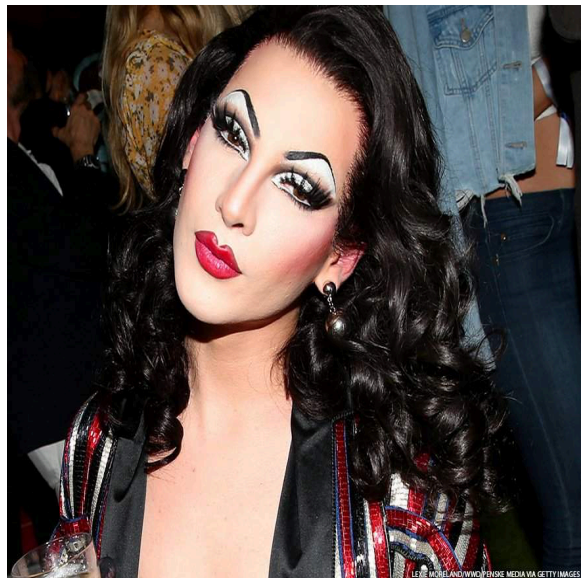




Remember how I said those were SOME examples of drag performers? Not all of them. Some of those pictures were of drag performers, and others were makeup artists, models, singers, etc. See how you can't always tell? Here, let me help you out.



Michelle Visage, singer + TV personality



Violet Chatchki, drag artist



Rhea Ripley, WWE Wrestler



A drag artist reading a book



Sasha Colby, Miss Continental 2012 and she's also a drag artist



A makeup artist who popped up when I googled "art makeup" Oh,



Chad Michaels performing as Cher



The actual singer Cher



I actually don't know if this is a drag artist or a character impersonator.



Chappell Roan, singer

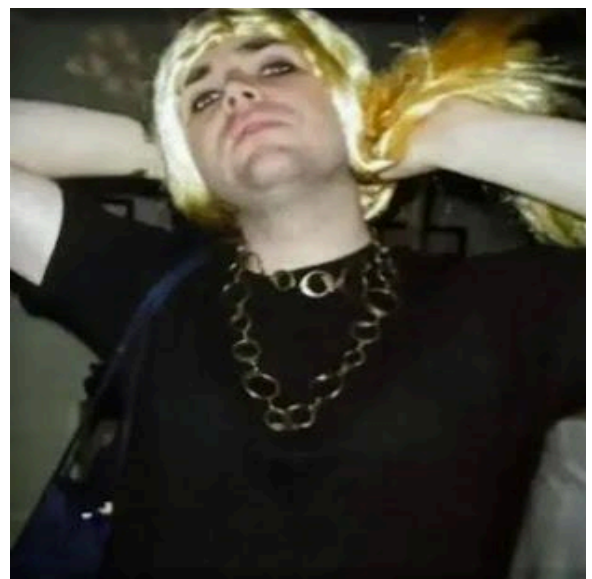
As you can see, the “we can always tell” crowd CAN'T always tell because there is no obvious indicator that one is or is not a drag performer.

- This bill operates under the assumption that everyone enforcing it will have the same idea of what is or isn't drag when that is blatantly false. Under this bill, a drag artist would be charged with a felony for performing a dance routine in public, while a cheerleader doing the exact same dance in the exact same outfit would not be charged. It's purely discriminatory. The bill equates living as or performing while transgender, and the art form of Drag, with being obscene and harmful to juveniles, perpetuating harmful stigmas and discrimination.

And for good measure:



Is this a drag queen?





Nope, that was Vice President JD Vance.

Was it obscene for JD Vance to play dressup? Or was he perhaps just having fun like people often do when engaging with art?

Point three: HB 249 is a ridiculous diversion from the real issues endangering both our state's children, and children around the world.

- What about the issues that actually cause harm to juveniles? We have real problems across this state like child poverty, hunger, homelessness, mental healthcare, major decreases in literacy, and child sex trafficking. Why are you more worried about someone reading a story at a library while dressed as a fairy princess than you are about actual pedophiles running our government, or our state sending BILLIONS of dollars to massacre children overseas? If there is a genuine concern for the safety of children, perhaps you could do something about the actual issues threatening them.

There are things that would actually benefit and protect Ohioan children. Here are a list of things I would prefer my taxes and the attention of my representatives be directed towards instead:

- Expand mental health support for youth. There's already a fantastic effort to create mobile crisis units in multiple counties. Let's keep that momentum going until every child in every county has access to the health care they need and deserve!
- Stop child sex trafficking. Why are we wasting time talking about drag performance when that time could be used to investigate child trafficking across the state?
  - In 2024 there were 21,342 people reported missing in OH, 16,404 of those were children. An additional 8,415 missing children cases were dismissed as runaways.
    - SOURCE:  
<https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Media/News-Releases/May-2025/A-G-Yost-Releases-2024-Missing-Children-s-Report>
  - In 2023, OH police failed to report 89% of the children found missing for over a year. Police departments are woefully undertrained in missing persons cases.



- <https://www.publicnow.com/view/0BF7E402FA38A18DA39DBA84D0987F429A545A96#>
    - <https://www.aol.com/articles/why-gop-senator-refuses-return-123047799.html>
    - <https://www.thepostathens.com/article/2026/03/news-article-leslie-wexner-jeffrey-epstein-files-columbus-ohio-controversy>
  - Coincidentally, several of these same politicians are happily wasting more of our taxpayer dollars to take vacations to Israel. They then return home and send billions to Israel to subsidize their healthcare, housing, and education while children here in Ohio suffer. These politicians would rather send a foreign nation money and weapons to bomb children in Palestine, Lebanon, and Iran than take care of children in our own state. Why are we talking about drag when a legitimate threat to children globally is bombs our state manufactures and pays for?
  - These are people in our state who hold power and are dangerous to children. If you wanted to protect kids, you would stop them. Why are we talking about drag performances?
- In Ohio, 1,800,530 people are facing hunger - and of them 517,450 are children. That's roughly 1 in every five children here who need food. People facing hunger in Ohio are estimated to report needing **\$1,158,299,000** more per year to meet their food needs. Why are we talking about drag performances?
  - SOURCE: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/ohio#:~:text=What%20Hunger%20Looks%20Like%20in,of%20them%20517%2C450%20are%20children.&text=face%20hunger,.to%20meet%20their%20food%20needs.>
- Why are you trying to stop drag performers from encouraging reading when our child literacy rates desperately need improvement? Only 62.3% of third grade students and 58.9% of fourth grade students scored proficient or higher on the respective state English language arts tests in 2022-2023. 32% of students in kindergarten through grade 3 with Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans who were not on track in the 2021-2022 school year advanced to on track status by the fall of the 2022-2023 school year. At least SOMEONE is trying to get the kids to read, why aren't you?
  - SOURCE: <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/About/Annual-Reports/K-4-Literacy-Report-for-2022-2023-School-Year.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US#:~:text=The%20data%20in%20this%20Kindergarten,these%20students%20are%20achieving%20proficiency.>
- Ohio's public and community schools reported that 26,385 students (1.5% of total enrollment) lacked a fixed, regular, and adequate place to sleep during the 2021–2022 school year.
  - SOURCE: [https://ohiohome.org/hna-23/executivesummary.aspx#:~:text=Ohio%27s%20youth%20remain%20at%20risk,at%20that%20age%20\(21%25\).](https://ohiohome.org/hna-23/executivesummary.aspx#:~:text=Ohio%27s%20youth%20remain%20at%20risk,at%20that%20age%20(21%25).)
- The number of Ohio students experiencing homelessness, according to ODEW:

- 2023-24 school year: 25,550
- 2022-23 school year: 24,046
- 2021-22 school year: 21,586
- 2020-21 school year: 21,118
- 2019-20 school year: 24,193
  - SOURCE:  
<https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2025/01/21/ohio-students-experiencing-homelessness-is-on-the-rise-but-likely-an-undercount/#:~:text=By:%20Megan%20Henry%20%2D%20January%202021,school%20year%2C%20according%20to%20ODEW.>
- And if you would like to review the 2024 Child Fatality Report for Cuyahoga county, you'll notice "drag performance" is never mentioned. I'd imagine other countries have similar findings, insofar as none of them mention drag performance.
  - SOURCE:  
<https://ccbh.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Child-Fatality-Review-2024-Executive-Summary.pdf>

Notice how not ONE of those issues relates to drag performance, but what are we here discussing today? Nothing of substance. The biggest issues facing children right now are the warped priorities of legislatures who say they'll protect kids, but really their actions only serve a hateful agenda with no foundation in logic, science, statistics, or reason.

Why the hell are you worried about a performer putting on a wig and some makeup to lip-sync to "My Heart Will Go On" by Celine Dion or "Life After Love" by Cher when we have REAL PROBLEMS to address? This is utterly ridiculous. Do something useful.

Thank you for your time and consideration.