

House Judiciary Committee Chair Jim Thomas, Committee Vice Chair D.J. Swearingen, Ranking Member Eric Synenberg, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Nico Lawson. I am a queer, trans-nonbinary resident of Columbus, OH. I am a professional arts administrator, dancer, choreographer, and former educator. I am also a local drag and burlesque performer. I am strongly opposed to House Bill 249.

First and foremost, HB 249 is a direct violation of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution which protects freedom of speech and expression. Second, this law violates Ohio's legal precedent established by the case City of Columbus v. Rogers, finding that this ordinance, in its vagueness, was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States.

As a visibly trans person in every aspect of my life I am most concerned about the provision of this bill that defines "an adult cabaret performance" as:

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

I was assigned female at birth. However, I am a nonbinary person who has pursued medical procedures that bring my body into alignment with who I am. So I ask you, how would this law apply to me, a visibly gender nonconforming person? Where do we draw the line between performance and life? Would my top surgery scars and intentional lack of nipples mark me as "purient" in any context, whether I am performing as Nico Lawson in my performance art or as my drag/burlesque persona? Would the fact that I have a feminine voice and certain features while having a masculine haircut and preferring masculine of center clothing mark me as obscene in every aspect of my artistic practice? Where do you draw the line?

I grew up in a rural county where football and religion were often synonymous. I also know that the Ohio Legislature and Gov. DeWine approved a new \$600 million dollar stadium for the Cincinnati Bengals. Will this law be equally applied to powder puff football games and womanless beauty pageants that raise money for American Cancer Walks? Will this law be equally applied to the Ben-Gals cheerleaders or the Cavaliers Dance Team whose dance performances where minors are present also fit this law's vague definition of indecent exposure? Or is your only goal to police the queer community in Ohio?

Finally, I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful and dangerous bill and stop giving this bill hearings. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.