

Tournier, Jeffrey

From: Andrew Saus II <andrewsausii@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 17, 2026 12:05 AM
To: Rep49; Rep89
Subject: HB 249 PUBLIC HEARING - REQUIRED DOCUMENTS
Attachments: HB 249 letter.txt; accessible-witness-information-formSSS.pdf; IMG_0206.jpg

Esteemed Representatives Thomas and Swearingen

Thank you for your time

Please find attached my completed witness slip and transcript of my testimony I would like to provide at the hearing for opponents to HB 249 on Wednesday, March 18.

I look forward to meeting you.

Thanks

Andrew Saus II

--Testimony/Statement Transcript--

The very first "inalienable, God-given right" afforded to us in the Constitution, is that of speech. This allows citizens to speak their minds and express themselves without fear of retaliation from the government (especially if they don't like what is being said). If the past decade has taught us anything it's that it is in the current administration's best interests to seek to limit those freedoms. This empowers their efforts to quell dissent and further disenfranchise and drown out the voices/negate the legacies of those who have fought and died for these rights for decades... rights that USED to be guaranteed to all Americans. Today, we, as a community are demanding that our voices be heard before yet another liberty is stripped away from us by those we elected to defend them.

HB249 is yet the latest form that this attack on the freedom of speech has taken. Co-authored by someone who I know personally, from a church where I spent some of my formative years, a person with familial ties to the leadership in our hometown of Celina, Ohio. This representative claims that HB 249 is needed because they supposedly witnessed drag queens at Celina's annual Smalltown Pride in "unitards and thongs gyrating on the floor in front of children and being forced by adults to tip them dollar bills like strippers". This representative dishonestly claims that this bill seeks only to classify drag performances in front of children as "indecent exposure". Yet this representative found it not indecent to stand shoulder to shoulder with members of a neo-nazi group in screaming slurs and obscenities (at close distance, mind you) at families and children in attendance.

The arguments for the inspiration of this bill could not be built on a more false foundation. The event in question featured drag queens dancing whilst wearing outfits more akin to that of Vegas showgirls - bright, flashy, and fun. The dancing was far from sexual, the song selection was family friendly, and the outfits were NOT revealing. Instead of trusting grifters a la Libs of TikTok, you can talk to anyone who has ever ACTUALLY been to a drag show. They can attest that there's nary exposed skin on a drag performer. It's completely covered under MANY layers of clothing, makeup, and padding. One of the many things drag artists are good at is "reading". They can read a room. They know their audience. When they are performing in a club for adults, that's one thing. When they're performing in public or in an all-ages/family friendly setting, it couldn't be any more dissimilar. They perform different songs with different choreography in different costumes with the resultant performances proving to be tame, tasteful, tactful, and empowering.

HB 249 seeks to classify drag performances in a place where minors may be present as "indecent exposure". I implore you to keep that in mind as I take you on a quick tour of the many events in this state that have 0 age restrictions for attendees. Just last weekend we had a pole-dancing championship at the Lincoln Theatre. Cheer competitions where both adults and minors are clad in less clothing and dance in an arguably more provocative manner than drag artists. My favorite has to be Miss Ohio which hosts beauty pageants where even minors can compete as well as attend (Baby Princess starts with literal babies, Tiny Princess, Princess, Sweetheart, Preteen, Junior Teen, Teen 16-18 (Unmarried), Miss 19-29 (Unmarried)). Some of these categories even boast a swimsuit and talent portion which, once again, may not only be viewable by minors but also COMPETE in. We have bodybuilding competitions where entrants wear thongs and bikinis to flaunt and display their near-nude bodies to an all-ages audience. Winners typically receive cash prizes, arguably a form of "tipping" like when drag artists do something spectacular or because we respect their artistry. Our state

also hosts major touring acts like Sabrina Carpenter and Taylor Swift who dress, dance, and lip-sync in a manner uncannily similar to drag queens.

What, then, prevents these forms of entertainment from being deemed "indecent" while drag shows are? Easy. Drag shows dare to declare that trans people exist; that they deserve to live authentically. That they deserve to use the bathroom, hold a job, and have official documents that reflect their identity. They deserve the same respect that we all do not only as American citizens, but as human beings. It boils down to its cultural flashpoint that some can't handle - people presenting as genders different from their biological sex. Artists creating expressive art of differing views. And finally, strong communities gathering together around entertainment that is joyful, political, encouraging, and meaningful all at once.

We are begging you, lawmakers, to focus on meaningful legislation that actually HELPS people. The builds bridges instead of divides. Banning access to books in libraries, stripping public schools of funding, and targeting drag performances are not only NOT protecting children or solving real problems - they are only starting more fires you won't care to throw water on, and instead let devour us.

For years, people on the right have loved to trot out the "slippery slope" argument as justification against legalization on a multitude of issues. If you're going to stand on that logic, then be honest about this bill. Because if you think that HB 249 is only about drag queens and nothing more... that this isn't a warning shot against trans folk...if you think that it won't be weaponized to further degrade the quality of the lives of those in your communities, then you're not being honest.

Not with the people who elected you.
Not with your family.
Not with your faith.
And not with your self.

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