

Senator,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Kennedy Brown and I am a young Black woman from Cleveland, Ohio representing Cleveland Heights Highschool. I'm here because I care deeply about my community—and because I'm honestly confused and disappointed by House Bill 113.

With everything going on in this state—underfunded schools, rising mental health struggles, economic inequality—this is what's being prioritized? A symbolic bill that doesn't solve any real problems? I want to say this with respect: this bill feels like a distraction. It doesn't make sense to me. It doesn't serve the people who need the most help. It doesn't fix the things that make life hard for young people like me, and it doesn't move Ohio forward. When I look at the issues my peers and I are facing, I can't help but wonder what we're supposed to think when we see elected officials focus on something like this instead. It sends a message—even if that's not your intention—that our struggles aren't urgent. That our needs aren't a priority. That we should sit and watch while time and power are spent on a bill that doesn't touch our reality. I'm asking you to really think about who this helps. And who it leaves behind.

I say this not out of anger, but out of hope. I want to believe our leaders care about young Black women like me. I want to believe that you see us, that you hear us, and that you're willing to fight for the things that matter.

This bill doesn't do that. So I respectfully urge you to vote no on Bill 113—and to start showing us, with your actions, that all of us truly matter.

Thank you for your time.