

Senate Education Committee
Testimony on HB96 May 14th 2025
Evelyn Holbert

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and all members of the Senate Education Committee: I thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Evelyn Holbert. I am a transgender woman and I am here today to speak against Sections; 9.05, 333.13 ,291.20, and 3375.47 of HB96 concerning youth shelters, mental health facilities, designating all books on gender and LGBTQ+ identities in libraries as 18+ and the adoption of culturally and scientifically incorrect definitions of gender and sex.

It's something of a joke in some parts of the trans community that you either knew you were trans all your life or you didn't have a childhood. Obviously this is an exaggeration but what it actually means is you are either born to a loving and accepting household or you are not.

I was not born to a loving and accepting household. My parents are surely the most wretched people you would ever know. I faced constant ridicule over every little thing I said or did. Oftentimes this ridicule was accompanied by beatings, destruction of the few possessions I had, or harm to my younger sister just to get to me. They routinely dehumanized me, stripped away my identity and any sense of self or safety I had. I began to believe them when they said I was stupid, confused, and disgusting. I began to believe them when they made fun of me for admitting I was suicidal and told me I should do it.

I would never dream of assigning reason to **child abuse**, as it is **inherently irrational**. However, the topic of me being gay or girly came up very frequently. This was something even other kids at school talked about and yes even some of my teachers. See I wasn't safe anywhere; not at home, not with other family, not at school, and especially not in my own head. For years I was burdened with the lessons the people in my life all taught me; that I was alone, that I deserved everything done to me, that I should be ashamed of my feelings, and of course to never be myself. I did not know what a trans person was until I was 17 years old. By that time I had so much hate in my heart I completely dismissed the idea as gross and weird as all the people in my life had done to me. The only thing that saved me from forever hating myself was getting to experience the stories of other trans people later on in my life. Hearing for the first time that I wasn't alone shocked me. Hearing other people describe exactly how I had felt for so long was utterly surreal. I finally had a name for the deep incomprehensible sadness I felt every day.. Gender dysphoria is a killer. You feel like a stranger in your own body. There is a certain anxiety and *wrongness* to it that I find extremely difficult to truly describe in words. There is only one treatment for it, transitioning. A treatment that I sought out after years of suffering in darkness. A treatment that has completely saved my life and made me want to live it the best way I can. This is the first time in my life I have ever felt this way.

Reality is often cruel however. I go through everything I did as a child which took me years to even begin to heal from. And the moment I find my happiness, the moment that I am finally able to reconcile with my past and who I have always been, I watch as my government

moves to mandate suffering. Declaring that every trans child now has to go through what I did. It will now be law that we intentionally fail to help some of our children just so they don't get it in their stupid, confused, disgusting heads that they are allowed to be themselves for even a second

Earlier I called child abuse inherently irrational and I think everyone in this room would agree with that assessment. So then what would we call these provisions in HB96. Declaring these books inappropriate for children and hiding them away robs our kids of the chance at learning about other people like them. Gives them less opportunity to learn that who they are is valid and the evil dehumanizing things done to them for this are not okay. Youth shelters will be faced with an impossible choice, to refuse to help trans children and force them back to their abusers. People like my parents. Mental health facilities must no longer facilitate transitioning. Need I remind all of you this is the only treatment for gender dysphoria. Untreated gender dysphoria leads to suicide, this is a death sentence. Finally the provision defining gender and sex. This is just further erasure of trans people. A declaration that trans kids can never be allowed to be themselves because look we wrote it down in a bill hardly anyone is going to read. This provision stretches further however. The absurd language of "belonging, at conception, to the sex that produces the large/small reproductive cell" not only makes every Ohioan female (Which I suppose is a win for me in some bizarre way) but it also denies the existence of people born incapable of producing these reproductive cells and intersex people. Intersex people which the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights described as "do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies".

So I ask again, what would we call these provisions in HB96. Gross? Weird? Stupid? Confused? Disgusting? I could go on for a very long time. But I would choose just two words to leave you with. **Inherently Irrational.**

Thank you all for your time.