

Senate Education Committee

Testimony of Geraldine Donna-Evangeline Hartman on Ohio HB 96

2025/05/14

[Opening]

I thank Dear Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, and Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee for the opportunity to provide public testimony today.

My name is Geraldine Donna-Evangeline Hartman, I'm a forty-five-year-old, transgender woman from Dayton, Ohio, born and raised. I have worked and paid taxes most of my life, since I was 16 years old, only having qualified as disabled as of January this year. I am presently going through a divorce after 25 years with my wife, who had billed herself as a trans-ally for most of the 19 years we have been married. We have two wonderful children together, ages 14 and 17, and you could be forgiven for thinking that my recent pursuit of coming to terms with my gender identity has had greater bearing on the current trajectory of my relationship with my wife than it has, actually. You see, my wife has known of my gender diversity since two months after we first started dating, and was in fact struggling with gender dysphoria herself when we first met, while also married to another man for whom gender identity was not a binary. No, far many more complex issues have congealed to create the circumstances of my failing marriage, not the least of which were some very standard factors such as financial and emotional difficulties, dishonesty, and yes, even some severe transphobia on the part of my spouse.

However, I am not here to discuss my personal life. I only bring these factors to light in order to illustrate that I am a real person with many troubles and flaws, just as your many other constituents, not some perfect, paid actor. Yes, I also am a transgender person, one for whom the journey of gender identity began in 2003 when I was still a college student at The University of Dayton. I was in counseling there then, and my wife (Then girlfriend) was present when my counselor first broached the subject of Gender Affirming Care; a topic of which I knew nothing at the time. However, my journey with gender identity started long before even my college years, first appearing for me when I was about 4-5 years of age, in 1984-1985, long before there was an internet or social media. I feel this is vital to point out since there are many among you who seek to cite these influences as a primary driving factor of what many legislators here would label as "gender ideology" as they seek to quench the flames of "the gender revolution" by way of subversive, transphobic legislation such as was inserted in the last 24 hours prior to voting into HB96 that was presented to the House.

I am here to testify, first, that transgender people such as myself are not an ideology, myth, or some cryptid like a yeti. We are real people, with real lives. We represent roughly 1% of your constituency, though, due to stigma, this number is likely higher, and the count is even higher when you consider the 1.7% of your constituents who are transgender by way of being born intersex. I am here to tell you that transgender people are not some pseudoscience, we are not some recent internet trend or fad, and we have existed for most of recorded human history. We do exist and we deserve the same rights to exist as all of your other constituents.

That we have U.S. presidents and state legislators alike trying to pass surreptitious laws to deny my existence. Were many on the right side of the aisle in the state of Ohio not clearly taking cues from the open bigotry of the president, walking in lockstep, Trans Unity Coalition would not need to be here to point out the wrongness of legislation negating us. Yet, here we are, real human beings who does not neatly fit into the flawed gender binary of humanity as defined by Donald Trump, a man who is no more a scientist or statistician than he is a good businessman; which is to say, not a reliable source of facts at all. That I have had to appear before you at all to prove the existence of transgender people is itself absurd.

I am here today to speak to the senate education committee in opposition to two provisions added to HB96— I write to you today in opposition to several sections of the budget, Sec. 3375.42 and 3375.47 of HB 96.

Specifically, those section are as follows:

Sec. 123.30. (A) Except as provided in division (B) of this section, no state agency or any entity that manages the grounds or buildings under the control of a state agency shall display on the grounds or building any flag except for the official state flag, as described in section 5.01 of the Revised Code, the United States flag, or the POW/MIA flag as described in section 9.50 of the Revised Code.

(B) Division (A) of this section does not apply to the Ohio statehouse or the grounds of the Ohio statehouse.

Section 3375.42 and 3375.47. A public library created under Chapter 3375. of the Revised Code shall place material related to sexual orientation or gender identity or expression in a portion of the public library that is not primarily open to the view of persons under the age of eighteen.

These provisions are all last-hour provisions surreptitiously added to the state budget that was being voted on by the house at the beginning of April, though neither has much of anything to do with the state budget itself. I am choosing to speak against the inclusion of these provision on the state budget because they represent clearly anti-transgender rhetoric and discrimination that has thrust itself into the spotlight across our nation in states capitals and even on the lips of the highest elected official in the United States, the president, which is a damning and shameful revelation.

Transgender discrimination has historically been only a steppingstone on the path towards discrimination of other groups, including racial minorities and women; whom such legislation is often purported to protect, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. No, the only people transphobic legislation actually serves to protect are the small-minded white men who propose it out of fear of themselves becoming an underrepresented minority in the near future. Here, the sections serve only to trample on the free speech of Ohio citizens, stifling their ability to express support for marginalized communities such as the African Americans and the LGBTQ+ community by prohibiting the display of all but a few flags. More importantly, the library provisions need to be stripped from this budget, as they not only will cost taxpayers even more money at

a time when the state has already stripped monies from libraries across the state, they serve to deprive library patrons of information that could be vital to their well being. Ignorance is not an option, cloistering books in a forbidden section based on gender or sexuality content serves to strip libraries of many more books for pre 18+ age categories than the writers likely intended, including all versions of the Bible. I feel the scope of this provision is far too broad, and should never have been included in a budget. I am a firm believer in information being power. Had I been able to access a fraction of the literature about gender and human sexuality that now exists, I feel I could have figured out my own gender identity much sooner than I did, and would have risked far less mental health crises. Understanding each other, ourselves is important, and hiding information that can aid in that, is harmful to everyone. I feel this provision seeks to hide from library patrons information that it has deemed as "harmful ideology" rather than information that patrons can utilize to make more informed decisions in their personal lives. This information is still publicly available from any internet-connected computer, so I further postulate that the inclusion of these provisions seeks to deprive those who's only access to such info may be their public library, because they are too poor to afford a computer or internet access at home; or they may not have a home. Please remove this from the state budget, HB96.

[Closing]

These provisions are not representative of the views of the majority of Ohioans, else supporters would not have had to sneak them in to avoid detection. These pose real harm to already marginalized and vulnerable parts of Ohio's population. African Americans deserve to be allowed to celebrate their history, because it is part of American history, even if it is a shameful part for many. Transgender and intersex people have existed for as long as humanity has, we are not an ideological movement, we are citizens and taxpayers, the same as you. I urge the committee to consult with actual constituents, to listen to their views, and to revise or reject these discriminatory provisions to the budget. If this does not happen, you are deliberately harming many people that you have promised to protect. Not only that, you will have aided bigots in hurting the wrong 1% of the population by hurting transgender people when it is clear that the 1% of the US population Americans should really be focused on are the billionaires who do NOT need the tax cuts they are being granted!

Thank you for your time. I welcome any questions