

Senate Finance Committee
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June 5, 2025

RE: HB96, the Ohio state budget - oppositional testimony

Dear Chair Cirino and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to House Bill 96 (HB96). I personally take many issues with the language of this lengthy bill; but, since it is over 5,555 pages, I will stick to the items most important to me. I'm writing today because I care deeply about the lives of transgender, nonbinary, and intersex people in Ohio—our neighbors, our friends, our family members—and **I'm urging you to stop politicizing the lives of gender diverse people**, who are owed the same rights, privileges, and responsibilities as gender normative folks like you.

One of the most disturbing parts of this bill is the redefinition of "sex" throughout Ohio law to mean only "male" or "female," based solely on sex assigned at birth. This may seem like a small semantic change, but for transgender, nonbinary, and intersex Ohioans, it is life-altering. This new narrow definition would force people to carry documents that don't reflect who they are. It would impact access to services, travel, housing, employment, healthcare, and disrupt legal recognition. It's not just dehumanizing—it's dangerous. And let's be clear: it will not hold up in court.

Trans people already face higher rates of discrimination, largely related to inaccurate identity documents. Putting this kind of rigid, binary definition into law will only make current mental health crises worse—and for many, especially young people, it could push them even further into depression, isolation, and hopelessness. Our youth are watching their state strip their legal rights away, one by one, right before their eyes. First, you came for their school sports; then you came for their medical care; their books; their names; now their IDs and the right to simply identify as their gender identity.

For nonbinary Ohioans—people who don't associate themselves with one specific gender based on the male/female binary system—this bill erases their identity entirely. It says they don't exist. Right now, this state is going backwards—HB96 would roll that back hard-fought legal rights and create chaos across agencies and documents. It tells nonbinary people they don't belong in the eyes or the laws of the state they call home.

And for intersex Ohioans specifically—people born with natural variations in their sex characteristics—this bill forces them into a binary category that simply doesn't reflect who they are. It means that even when medical professionals and individuals agree that legal documents should be corrected, the law would prevent it. That's not science. That's cruelty.

This bill also strips funding from youth shelters that specifically serve LGBTQ+ individuals—young people who are already at disproportionate risk of homelessness. It cuts

harm reduction programs, censors LGBTQ+ content from public libraries, and bans Pride flags from being displayed on government buildings. Let's be clear: HB96 isn't about responsibly allocating funding for the state's next fiscal year. It's about erasing people and their experiences for the political gain of a few. It tries to legislate away the existence of an entire group of Ohioans. During Pride Month. Shame on you.

HB96 doesn't just propose a budget. It proposes an agenda—one that disregards the dignity, rights, and survival of some of Ohio's most vulnerable communities. This bill is cruel, unconstitutional, and fiscally irresponsible. This bill does nothing to solve real problems. But it will absolutely create new ones—legal, financial, and most of all, human. Please do not pass HB96 with any language restricting or concerning LGBT+ identities. Please stand up for the right of every Ohioan to live safely and authentically, regardless of their sex, gender identity, or political affiliation.

These provisions aren't just morally wrong—they're legally indefensible. Courts across the country, including the Sixth Circuit, have ruled that discrimination based on gender identity or sex characteristics is a form of sex discrimination. If passed, HB96 would expose Ohio to costly lawsuits, jeopardize federal funding, and create needless legal confusion for state agencies. At the end of the day, it's Ohio taxpayers who will be paying the price for defending a law that was never needed in the first place. If Ohio passes this language into law, we will be sued. And we will lose.

Thank you again for your time and for reading.

Respectfully submitted,

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