

HB96, the Ohio state budget - opposition testimony

Dear Chair Cirino and Committee Members,

The 5,000 plus pages of HB96 are full of discriminatory language. I am writing to ask the committee to oppose any budget language that redefines 'sex' as 'biological sex.' This harms transgender and nonbinary Ohioans, and it does not belong in the state's budget.

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. Unfortunately, HB96 isn't about responsibly allocating funding for the state. 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.

The State of Ohio does not need to spend taxpayer money defending this type of discrimination in legal actions that are certain to be forthcoming. The culture wars are also bad for business and creates human capital flight because of the divisive politics. None of this is good for the state.

Using these citizens as political pawns must stop. I urge you to rethink the language in the budget and reject these cruel and unnecessary provisions.

Respectfully,

William Tarka
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