



TESTIMONY

**PROTECTING OHIO'S CHILDREN
FROM OBSCENE PERFORMANCES**

House Bill 245

June 4, 2024

TESTIMONY BEFORE

OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Criminal Justice Committee

TESTIMONY BY

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Honorable Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of HB 245.

My name is Alexandra Caro Campana. I am the Director of the Center for 1776 and the Center for Opportunity Now at the America First Policy Institute (AFPI). I submit this testimony on behalf of AFPI and personally as a mother and the wife of a law enforcement officer. As a mother, I am concerned for the safety and well-being of our most precious gifts—our children, to whom we have a paramount responsibility of care. Having a husband who is a law enforcement officer makes me acutely aware of the terrifying reality that hundreds of thousands of sex offenders and child predators exist.

At its core, HB 245 is based on one thing: protecting children from age-inappropriate performances and content. A summary of the bill makes clear that it is narrowly tailored to protect young people from graphic sexual content. HB 245:

“Creates the offense of “unlawful adult cabaret performance” that prohibits a person, with knowledge of its character and content, from recklessly engaging in an adult cabaret performance in a location other than an adult cabaret. Provides that the penalty for a violation of the offense is a first degree misdemeanor or a fourth or fifth degree felony depending of the circumstances of the offense.”

Adult Cabaret performance is defined as:

A performance in a location other than an adult cabaret that is harmful to juveniles or obscene and that features topless dancers; go-go dancers; exotic dancers; strippers; performers or entertainers who exhibit a gender identity that is different from the performer’s or entertainer’s gender assigned at birth using clothing, makeup, prosthetic or imitation genitals or breasts, or other physical markers; or other similar performers or entertainers who provide entertainment that appeals to a prurient interest, regardless of whether or not the performance is for consideration.

It should not be controversial to prohibit adult performances from occurring in places other than adult venues. Parents should not have to fear their children will be exposed to highly sexual and suggestive adult cabaret performances while taking them into a public venue such as a library or town plaza or dropping them off at school.



Over the last few years, we have seen a rapid proliferation of obscene performances around children, some of them produced explicitly for young audiences across the country,¹ including in public places. Many of these performances have featured provocative clothing and sexually suggestive dancing, “drag performers,” and age-inappropriate messages.

Some of these performances have included biological men dressed as women in drag shows straddling young girls,² spreading their legs in a manner suggestive of sexual intercourse, and thrusting their “breasts” in front of children.³ Not only are these types of performances entirely inappropriate for children, but they are also confusing to young people, some of whom are prepubescent. These performances make children uncomfortable and force parents to address age-inappropriate topics with their children.

These types of performances can also create opportunities for adults, for whom cross-dressing can, in some cases, be an erotic activity, to interact with young children. Autogynephilia is a recognized paraphilia that is believed to explain male-to-female cross-dressing and trans-identification in some (though not all) cases.⁴ It is defined as a man’s propensity to be sexually aroused by the thought or image of himself as a female. This is not often discussed, and is not applicable in all cases, but becomes highly relevant when assessing the appropriateness of drag shows that highlight males dressing as females parading lewdly around children. It is an alarming reality that some of these performers may be motivated to cross-dress by the sexual arousal they derive from the practice. It has no place in the presence of any children.

HB 245 would protect children and families from these adult performances. This is not just sound policy, but it is also consistent with longstanding commonsense laws and policies designed to protect children from obscene content. We protect children from age-inappropriate content in many ways, including “R” ratings for movies, “Mature 17+” ratings for video games that contain obscene or inappropriate content, bans on the dissemination of obscene materials to protect minors, laws that prohibit the production and distribution of child pornography, and laws that prohibit individuals under the age of 18 from entering or working in strip clubs. Many states are also now taking legislative action to strengthen the protection of children from obscene content

¹ Drag Story Hour. (n.d.). Home. Drag Story Hour. <https://www.dragstoryhour.org>

² Chasmar, J. (2023, March 28). Drag queen straddles girl at North Carolina public school, video shows. Fox News. <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/drag-queen-straddles-girl-north-carolina-public-school-video-shows>

³ Gordon, J. (2022, October 14). Shocking footage of ‘family friendly’ drag queen show sees performer spreading their legs and thrusting their breasts in front of children who are encouraged to leave tips. Daily Mail. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11317925/Shocking-footage-family-friendly-drag-queen-sees-performer-spreading-legs-kids.html>

⁴ Duggan, L. (2023, April 23). Transgender autogynephilia (AGP) and transition. Daily Caller. <https://dailycaller.com/2023/04/23/transgender-autogynephilia-agp-transition/>



by advancing policies designed to ensure that pornographic websites are not viewed by children under 18 years.

Parents and policymakers have a duty to safeguard children's innocence and ensure that the vulnerability of youth is not exploited by ideologues or predators. Protecting them from exposure to obscene and age-inappropriate content in public places has become necessary in recent years as a result of a radical movement that knows no boundaries. This policy will protect children, is in line with current laws and policies, and is in the best interest of Ohio's children and families. For these reasons, I support HB 245 and urge its immediate passage. I appreciate your consideration of my concerns. Thank you.

