

Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Higher Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to House Bill 183. My name is Dion Manley, I'm a parent, school volunteer, and a local school board member. I testify today as a private citizen of Ohio, representing only myself.

As a parent and community member, I am here to speak in opposition to what is being called "the bathroom bill", I'd like to explain why. We all have different challenges and struggles. Growing up my name was Diane and in 1st grade I knew I was not like the girls. I felt more like the boys but that was not my reality either. I had no one to talk or relate to. I made my way, but I was insecure, fearful and felt judged for being different.

I first came out at 19 in the '70s, then later as transgender in the '90s. I have faced discrimination, anger and hateful comments for much of my life. It doesn't have to be that way for young people today.

I currently serve in a school district that welcomes and embraces each and every student for who they are. Our students are engaged, gain a love of learning and feel a sense of pride, community and inspiration within our district.

People in the local community know I'm a transdad, see my amazing daughter and know I'm a good parent. They even elected me to represent the best interest of their children as a member of the school board. I won a hotly contested school board race to become the first openly trans elected official in Ohio.

In the '90s I used men's facilities and locker rooms at a University and the Y with no incidents. Also taking into consideration many trans and non-binary people have very different experiences. I will say that sending transwomen into men's rooms is a set up for unnerving, dangerous, and degrading experiences. Like you, I sometimes need to use the restroom when I'm away from home. What restroom should people like me use? What are the options?

Locally elected officials in each district can navigate and decide what serves their students and families. As for sports, OHSAA has successfully navigated this for less than 20 students over the last 8 years & should be allowed to continue.

Messaging in the 70's was that Lesbians and Gays will molest/convert our children, that messaging continues today with Trans and gender non-conforming people as villains. Plus, now even our professional Educators are suspect if they treat students with care and respect. I understand fearing the unknown, the instinct to protect is real but with high emotions and our different realities colliding, the students are suffering here. The solution? Local control by professional educators in cooperation with families, student input, locally elected officials & strategic partnerships of professional departments and organizations. We're all different in some way. Now is the time to be stronger because of our differences rather than weaker. With that I am eager to hear from our young people who are here and will take any questions you have for me today or anytime in the future. I respectfully ask you to support Decency, Dignity and Respect for every student, and reject the fear-mongering and hurtful policies within House Bill 183.