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October 10, 2023

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

My name is Erin Upchurch, and my pronouns are she/her. I am a parent of two young adults, an independently licensed social worker and former therapist in the state of Ohio, and the Executive Director of [Kaleidoscope Youth Center](https://www.kaleidoscopeyouthcenter.org/); Ohio's largest and longest standing organization to serve and support LGBTQIA+ youth and young adults ages 12-24.

I am writing to express absolute opposition to HB 183.

HB 183 is blatant discrimination. This bill unnecessarily targets transgender and non binary students. HB 183 politicizes the lives of young people in Ohio, with zero regard for their health and well-being; and is an egregious misuse of power, and a breach of public trust in caring for the youth of Ohio.

In reviewing a snapshot of the lives of young people in Ohio, ages 0-24, the following information was identified:

¹Percentage of Ohio's youth experiencing poverty, food insecurity, low or no income households

Children in poverty	20%
Children ages 0 to 5 in poverty	23%
Black or African American children ages 0 to 5 in poverty	48%

¹ [Ending Child Poverty - Children's Defense Fund Ohio \(cdfohio.org\)](https://www.cdfohio.org/)

Hispanic or Latino children ages 0 to 5 in poverty	39%
Non-Hispanic White children ages 0 to 5 in poverty	16%
Children receiving food assistance	1 in 3
Children whose parents lack secure employment	28%
Black or African American children whose parents lack secure employment	47%
Hispanic or Latino children whose parents lack secure employment	40%
Non-Hispanic White children whose parents lack secure employment	23%

Additionally,

- ²Suicide rates among young people under 24 continues to rise
- ³Suicides among youth aged 14 and younger has increased 300%
- ⁴Black children under 13 years old are two times more likely to die by suicide compared to their white peers.
- ⁵1,547,110 Ohioans are facing hunger – nearly three for every ten are children. Statewide, roughly one in six children do not have their nutritional needs met
- ⁶Just 20 percent of Ohio students reach college ready benchmarks in all four areas of the ACT.
- ⁷The average graduation rate at Ohio colleges is 57.3%

² [2021 OhioMHAS Annual Report | Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services](#)

³ [2021 OhioMHAS Annual Report | Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services](#)

⁴ [2021 OhioMHAS Annual Report | Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services](#)

⁵ [Ending Child Poverty - Children's Defense Fund Ohio \(cdfohio.org\)](#)

⁶ [Ohio Education by the Numbers : 2023 Statistics, Charts, Tables & Maps : Thomas B. Fordham Institute Advancing Educational Excellence \(ohiobythenumbers.com\)](#)

⁷ [2023 Ohio Colleges Graduation Rate Comparison \(collegeevaluator.com\)](#)



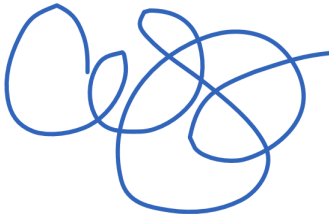
HB 183 centers the biases and misunderstandings of adults, and is out of touch with the actual needs of young people in Ohio. Ohio's youth and young adults deserve more. They deserve better from the adults and leaders put into positions of power in interest of supporting and promoting their thriving. Legislation and policies such as HB 183 do nothing to protect any child or young person; and instead, only further marginalize and promote harm. **This is bullying behavior.**

Moving this legislation forward would demonstrate a complete lack of regard and concern for the lives, futures, and perhaps, most importantly, the humanity of Ohio's youth.

Simply put, the sponsors and supporters of HB 183 are **focused on the wrong things.**

Please do not support HB 183

Sincerely,



Erin Upchurch, MSSA, LISW-S
Executive Director
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