

Opponent Testimony to HB 183

Ohio House Higher Education Committee

October 11, 2023

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Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Higher Education Committee, thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts with you on Ohio House Bill 183.

My daughter Alex is a typical teenager. She is a junior at a vocational high school in Milan, Ohio with a part-time job at Cedar Point Amusement Park near Huron where she has lived her whole life. She has many friends and likes to do typical teenage girl activities—shop, eat junk food and have sleep-overs with friends.

Alex is also transgender. This is just one facet of her life. She has never been harassed or bullied for being transgender—until now.

Alex is being bullied by Ohio Representative Adam C. Bird and Representative Beth Lear—the two sponsors of House Bill 183. These Representatives have taken it upon themselves to push their religious and medical beliefs on ALL Ohioans. Please revisit Representative Lear’s sponsor testimony to back up this statement. According to their testimony, transgender Ohioans are confused, misinformed and tricked into a treatment that is against God and all that he has created. They were tricked by a force intent on causing chaos and provoking fear in the hearts of all God-fearing bathroom dwellers of Ohio.

Why *wouldn't* women fear sharing a bathroom with individuals such as my daughter? Their own representatives have made it abundantly clear that they SHOULD be afraid—so afraid that a bill must quickly be passed to keep them safe and separate.

It bears repeating that this country was founded on the principle of separation of church and state. But Representative Lear’s sponsor testimony clearly demonstrates her belief regarding the

natural order of men and women—created by God—and the abomination of any science or lived experience stating otherwise. I respect her freedom to hold these opinions. But she is abusing her position by forcing these beliefs on ALL Ohioans. If she is indeed uncomfortable or fearful of sharing a bathroom with another Ohioan with gender dysphoria, one being treated medically with the support of their doctors and parents (if still a child), she can choose to use a gender neutral bathroom available.

These Representatives have made clear their disdain for science and the inclusion of those who are different from themselves, and I will not change their opinions—as backward as they may be. But their opinions cannot be made into bills that ruin REAL human beings' lives—approximately 61,200 transgender lives in Ohio per the latest numbers. These numbers include my daughter, my niece, my daughter's friend, her coworker at Cedar Point, a teacher at OSU, and the list goes on and on across Ohio.

Ohio House Bill 183 says that Ohio does not value their lives or happiness. It says that they don't deserve the dignity and freedoms to be their true selves. They are not welcome. The reps talk of fear felt by women in restrooms being near someone who does not present gender exactly like them. Being around someone unlike you can be unnerving at times. The first time I saw a person with a missing limb I felt uncomfortable and it made me nervous. Do you know what helped resolve those feelings? Being educated and exposing myself to the unknown. Instead of spending our time and effort on bills to create and encourage segregation, let's create educational opportunities to learn about our fellow Ohioans who are different from ourselves.

There are already laws in place to protect against indecent exposure and violence in restrooms. All the bills in the world will not eradicate transgender human beings. They exist and are not going away. Ohio must evolve with the science that will create new situations in our world, science and lived experience that require looking through a lens from the 21st century, not the 1950's, for solutions. We cannot move Ohio backwards because we are afraid of what we don't understand or what our personal religion tells us is wrong. We are a state of many beliefs, lifestyles, religions, and viewpoints. Our bills must serve ALL Ohians and meet our needs for inclusion and freedom to express our true selves.

In Lieutenant Governor John Husted's keynote address at Ohio's Workforce Summit, hosted by the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, he said, "Immigration will save us." He was referring to our critical workforce shortage. As we welcome businesses and immigrant workers and students to Ohio, the number of people different from ourselves will increase. Let's demonstrate we recognize and embrace those differences with modern laws. All across Ohio, families and communities love their transgender members. We are not afraid of them. We are afraid *for* them.

I love my daughter Alex. Please vote no on House Bill 183.