

Opponent Testimony for HB 183  
House Higher Education Committee

October 10, 2023

Katherine Sammons, Media Production Specialist

Chair Tom Young, Vice Chair Gayle Manning, Ranking Member Joseph A. Miller, III, and members of the House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Katherine Sammons. I specialize in freelance media production and am currently employed with the City of Mason, Ohio, where I work closely with members of the administration and at times City Council. Additionally, my professional path has intricately woven through various sectors within Ohio, embracing education, corporate, and governmental domains, curating a multifaceted career trajectory. I attended the University of Cincinnati, studying at Blue Ash College and the College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning (DAAP). During this time, I worked at UC Blue Ash and the UC Foundation, and also supported the UC Alumni Association. I transitioned from male to female while attending and working at the University of Cincinnati. I graduated to work with major brands, such as the Kroger Company, Microsoft, Cincinnati Public Schools, and various human rights advocacy groups in the area. I have also received several points of recognition, such as the Employee Excellence Award from the City of Mason. I believe my experiences make me well-qualified to testify against House Bill 183.

#### I. A Conscientious Transition

My transition from male to female at the University of Cincinnati was a deeply considered journey, blending medical necessity and spiritual alignment. It was not a hasty decision but a deliberate path, guided by medical and mental health experts. The medical aspect was crucial to aligning my physical self with my psychological identity. I have since fostered an incredibly loving relationship with my family and friends, and have experienced a fulfilling life that may have ended otherwise. Simultaneously, it was a spiritual journey, bringing me closer to my true self and to God. This experience has shown me that embracing our true selves, both medically and spiritually, enables us to contribute positively to society and foster a safer, more understanding community for all.

#### II. Professional Collaboration Across Ohio

In my career, I've collaborated across diverse Ohio industries—corporate, governmental, and non-profit. My identity as a transgender woman has been recognized and largely embraced, especially by my primarily cisgender female superiors. This underscores that inclusive and successful collaborations are not only feasible but thriving in our state. It's imperative to underscore that my transgender identity has not hindered my professional achievements or the substantial contributions I have made to society. Conversely, it's the instances of discrimination and bias that I've encountered which have posed challenges and disruptions in professional environments, not my identity itself. I am proud to have continued despite this adversity to foster my best life possible.

### III. Objections to HB 183

HB 183 directly contradicts the foundational principles of freedom and inclusivity that the United States holds dear. These proposed restrictions not only deviate from our nation's core values, which guarantee every individual the right to work and live with dignity and respect, regardless of their identity, but they also misallocate valuable government resources and time. Government's role should be to safeguard and empower its people, addressing the real challenges they face. Shifting our focus to legislate on issues that curtail the inalienable rights of individuals—the rights to pursue life's necessities, defend their liberties, and seek safety, health, and happiness in all lawful ways—represents a betrayal of our foundational promise to serve and uplift all citizens. Governance should inherently respect and uphold every individual's rights, ensuring their pursuits of safety, health, and happiness are actively supported.

### IV. Economic and Social Impacts

Policies like HB 183 carry implications that reach far beyond a mere contradiction of our nation's core principles; they pose a substantial risk to the stability of our economic and social structures. If such non-inclusive policies are enacted, they could deter talented students from enrolling in our colleges and universities. What if individuals like myself, who have actively contributed to Ohio's socio-economic fabric, were excluded or chose not to participate in our educational systems? How many skilled individuals, supportive families, and inclusive companies might opt to bypass Ohio due to these non-inclusive policies? Diversity is not just a societal benefit; it's a vital economic catalyst, particularly within academia. A multitude of perspectives empowers institutions to grasp the complete picture, enabling the development of effective solutions to complex problems. Policies that undermine our diverse student and workforce populations risk impeding our collective growth and prosperity, diminishing the vibrant dynamism that defines our state.

### V. Concerns and Alternative Propositions

It's crucial for the committee to foster a comprehensive and accurate understanding of transgender individuals. Our nation's pride in championing freedom and inclusivity calls us to devise solutions that safeguard the rights and dignities of all citizens. Instead of adopting exclusionary practices that starkly contrast with our national ethos, we should explore alternative, inclusive solutions. One particularly fitting solution is the implementation of private bathrooms. This approach directly addresses privacy and safety concerns without infringing upon fundamental freedoms and dignities. It also mirrors a common scenario found in our homes where bathrooms are gender-neutral and used by all family members without issue. Translating this universally accepted practice to public spaces can alleviate concerns while upholding inclusive values. Furthermore, establishing family bathrooms also offers a practical solution for parents, especially fathers with daughters and mothers with sons, ensuring safety and convenience for all. Embracing solutions like these creates an environment considerate of diverse needs, practical in its application, and in harmony with the true American spirit—an approach that is inclusive, respectful, and protective of all citizens.

## VI. Conclusion

In drawing this testimony to a close, I implore the committee to oppose HB 183 and ardently advocate for policies that unequivocally uphold the dignity, respect, and equality of all Ohioans. Transgender people, although significantly under-represented, have demonstrated remarkable fortitude, thriving amidst global adversities and showcasing a resilience that is nothing short of inspirational. This indomitable strength is precisely what Ohio needs to foster a successful future. By omitting them or endorsing discriminatory policies, we risk not only alienating this resilient group but also every individual, entity, and ally that supports and appreciates them – a cohort that is substantial and integral to our state’s fabric. It is my sincere hope that my words have offered valuable insight and will be considered earnestly in your deliberations on HB 183. I stand with countless others in opposing this bill and advocating for a future where every individual is recognized, respected, and protected under the law.

Thank you for your consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

*Katherine Sammons*

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