

Opponent Testimony for Higher Education Committee HB 183

Melissa McLaren

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

Thank you for reading my written testimony in opposition to HB 183. As someone who works in nursing higher education, I can't fathom how HB 183 will work in our colleges and universities. And as the mother of a transgender teenage girl, I am horrified by how the sponsors of this bill have depicted children like my daughter, as sexual predators.

Impacts to college choice

As the mother of freshly graduated high school seniors (twins) I watched my children weigh the pros and cons of in-state schools versus out-of-state schools. Both of my children were initially considering universities in Ohio, and both ultimately decided to leave Ohio to go to a school in a state with politics that aligned with their values. And they aren't alone. In March of this year, Art and Science Group published results of a poll discussing how 1 in 4 high school seniors ruled out colleges that they would have initially considered because it was in a state with policies, politics, or legal issues that they didn't agree with. The largest subgroup of kids rejecting schools based on politics were those who identified as LGBTQ+.

While this frustrates me as a mother who wishes her kids could attend school closer to home, it concerns me as someone working in nursing higher education. With Ohio's nursing workforce shortage, the last thing we need to do is create reasons for potential nursing students to choose schools outside of Ohio.

Impacts to college operations

This bill can't be operationalized. Colleges aren't going to pay a staff member to stand outside of every bathroom to check birth certificates of anyone going in to use the facilities. Students won't be carrying copies of their birth certificate with them on campus and a driver's license can be updated to reflect a transgender individual's affirmed gender. Many transgender folks look like their affirmed gender, many cisgender folks have androgenous appearances, and some cisgender folks don't conform to outdated ideas of gender presentation. What this bill will do is target anyone who doesn't fit into stereotypical gender norms. Have the sponsors of the bill given any thought about how schools and universities will be able to tell who should and shouldn't be using bathrooms outside of physical appearance?

Casting Transgender Youth as Sexual Deviants

I am routinely horrified by the bills that keep targeting transgender youth in Ohio. We've had bills that want to deny them gender-affirming care "to protect them" while simultaneously depicting them as going into bathrooms and locker rooms under sexual pretenses. Representative Lear connected transgender youth in locker rooms as contributing to pornography in our country during the sponsor testimony. House Bill 68 which passed the House earlier in the year wants to take away the ability of trans youth to get evidence-based, medically necessary gender-affirming healthcare, take away their

ability to play on sports teams, and now this bill wants to take away their right to go to the bathroom safely. It feels an awful lot like the sponsors of these bills in no way want to protect trans youth; it feels like the sponsors of these bills want to make their lives miserable.

Oppose HB 183

This bill should not pass out of committee. Schools and universities will never be able to monitor bathrooms in the way the sponsors of this bill intend. This type of legislation does nothing to protect youth from anything. It creates problems instead of solving them. It creates reasons for students to choose schools outside of Ohio. It doesn't provide funding to help schools build more single-stall bathrooms. This bill is one more that targets transgender youth in the state of Ohio instead of solving real problems facing families today. I urge you to oppose this bill and turn your attention to issues that will help Ohio families.

Again, thank you for allowing me to present written testimony in opposition to HB 183.

Melissa McLaren

References

Art and Science Group. (2023). Politics, Policies, and Student Perspectives – The Impact of State Social Policies on College Choice. Found at: [Politics, Policies, and Student Perspectives – The Impact of State Social Policies on College Choice \(adobe.com\)](#)