

Chair Young and Ranking Member Miller,

My name is Rachel Ryan, and I am a mental health professional in the city of Columbus. As a therapist, I serve several children and adults in the transgender community and have seen firsthand the damage that laws targeting the transgender community do to the mental and physical health of transgender individuals.

As a cisgender woman and wife of a transgender, nonbinary person, I have often felt helpless watching my spouse endure countless demonstrations of disrespect solely due to their gender identity. We have made safety plans anytime we travel outside of the city, especially around bathroom usage; due to the passage of bills such as this one, my spouse and I enter all public bathrooms together. In the rare cases in which this is not possible, I am instructed to go in after them if they don't get back in a certain amount of time, and I often sit in the car terrified of what could happen without me there. I have heard stories of outright disgust being expressed at the sight of my spouse in a women's restroom, and I fear that the passage of this bill could escalate these situations to physical violence, which has already occurred in the state of Ohio when a transgender man used the women's restroom as this bill would dictate. The fact that my spouse, who is one of the kindest, friendliest, most jovial people I have ever met was looked at with disgust just for entering a bathroom is devastating to me. The idea of losing the love of my life because they dared to use a public restroom and perform a bodily function that everyone, regardless of sex or gender, performs, is beyond terrifying and is something no human being should have to face.

While I know that this bill applies strictly to Ohio K-12 schools and universities, I utilize this story as an example of the terror that transgender students, as well as students that may not look feminine enough to be in a women's restroom or masculine enough to be in a men's restroom, will face daily if this bill is passed. Many may refrain from using the restroom as much as possible, using means such as abstaining from food or drink, causing disordered eating and health issues. When transgender students do use the restroom either with or without a friend or ally to protect them, they will be risking their physical safety due to the very real danger of violent tactics being used to enforce this bill. Instead of protecting children from the threat of violence in bathrooms, this bill exposes them to it. I do not understand how any child or young adult could exercise their right to education with legal restrictions such as these that hinder their ability to focus on academics by threatening their safety.

For the good of the community, for people like my spouse and like the students I work with as a therapist, please vote no on HB183.

Respectfully,

Rachel Ryan, MA