

Ohio House Higher Education Committee
House Bill 183 Proponent Written Testimony Only
October 17th, 2023

Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and Members of the Committee, I am writing today in support of House Bill 183. I am a board member for the Mentor School District, and a founding board member of the Ohio School Board Constitutional Coalition. I am writing on my own behalf and my views do not represent those of the entire Mentor School Board.

Our district experienced a couple instances over the past year in which there has been altercations between biological boys and our female students. Both situations were captured on video by students and were unfortunately shared on social media. These videos have made parents lose trust in our district and have many of them concerned for the safety of their children.

The first instance occurred in our female restroom at our high school. There was a biological boy (who identified as a girl) who had been using the female restroom. Several girls met him in the bathroom and a verbal argument ensued. This altercation almost turned physical before someone bravely stepped in and stopped the situation from advancing. This is not a safe environment for either party.

The second situation which was reported on by our local news station, depicted a female being terribly assaulted in our cafeteria by a biological male (whom many students state identifies as a female). The assault is very hard to watch. The only reason it ceased is due to a member of our staff and our resource officer stepping in. If this assault would have taken place in our bathroom, due to our open bathroom guidelines based on title IX proposed changes, the outcome could have been even worse. Thankfully, this situation happened in front of others so that it could be stopped.

The open bathroom guidelines I am referring to are an issue for our schools. In our district, we do not automatically notify parents if their child wants to use a bathroom or locker room of the opposite sex. It's been said at previous meetings that we only notify parents if the student is comfortable and willing for us to involve the parents, or if the student is in elementary school. This leaves a loophole for those who may want to take advantage of that guideline to gain access into the opposite bathroom or locker room.

I understand fully that we may have students who do not feel comfortable using the bathroom of their biological sex. I think we need to look at different options or adding more gender-neutral single stall bathrooms to accommodate those who do not want to use the bathroom of their biological sex. We currently do have one single stall bathroom in all of our buildings. However, the practice of allowing students to use any bathroom they want, any day, based on how they identify that particular day, is not a good solution. It violates the rights of the majority of our female students and is an immense safety risk for all parties.

Thank you for taking the time to read my written testimony in support of House Bill 183. I sincerely hope you consider supporting this bill for the safety of all our students.

Sincerely,

Annie Payne

Mentor School Board Member * This testimony is written on my own behalf and not representative of the Mentor Board of Education
Ohio School Board Constitutional Coalition Board Member