

Proponent Testimony: H.B. No. 183

My name is Melanie Kirin. I reside at 8552 Timber Trail, Brecksville, Ohio. Today, I am testifying via this written document as a proponent of H. B. No. 183. I am a mother of two children and an Ohio public institution educator. Today, I speak to you from both perspectives. I recognize my views are not shared by all in the public education arena or by my institution. My concerns are also shared in my local community, amongst moms specifically raising daughters, and by educators who are concerned about the future of public education in our state.

In September 2022, my freshman, fifteen-year-old daughter exited the bathroom stall at Brecksville-Broadview Heights High School to find a fully biological boy in the public girls' restroom. She was taken aback by the fact the boy was in the girls' restroom, and he acted like it was his normal behavior. She, on the other hand, was very upset and relayed the incident to us at dinner that evening. No one in our family even knew this was a possibility.

What followed the next few months was significantly frustrating as some district members demonstrated a lack of transparency and disregard for the situation. The following is an account of the events of the school year.

After the incident, we scheduled a meeting with the building administrator who we admire and respect. We learned our daughter could use the nurse's restroom (one facility near the main office) if she felt uncomfortable. The district did not have an explicit policy; however, the building was aware of mixed-gender bathroom usage and was comfortable with the situation (despite her discomfort). I then reached out to our district Title IX administration. They did not respond. Next, the district Superintendent and Board of Education members were made aware in a public meeting (October) and via email about the implicit policies regarding mixed-gender restroom usage. Some members of the board contacted us letting us know they had no prior knowledge of mixed-gender usage in any of the district buildings. Upon further exploration, they confirmed that mixed-gender bathroom usage was occurring. In December 2022, my first official request for a board-approved, explicit bathroom policy was made. During that time, our daughter was removed twice from study hall to discuss her feelings about the situation without our consent. In January 2023, I met with the superintendent to make the explicit policy request again and offer solutions. During the winter, the high school converted staff bathrooms to single-use facilities for anyone to use. On April 3, 2023, the request for an explicit policy was officially rejected by the board of education. Board President Mark Dosen stated, "...the board was not interested in creating any new policies for non-biological students and the use of school facilities." Mr. Dosen later called us to explain the district lawyers did not want to approach this "hypothetical" situation for press relations concerns. Male students continued to use the girls' restroom throughout the school year and additional incidences occurred. This was not hypothetical.

Purposefully, I have provided this level of detail. First, I wanted this legislative body to see the efforts we took to cooperate with our district. We didn't run a social media campaign slamming our district for ignoring the privacy of our daughter and the daughters of our

community. We recognize our administrators, educators, and board members are community members who work hard and with whom we trust our most precious gift – our children. Second, time and time again there was an absolute denial of transparency due to a fear of bad public relations. The district has a strong commitment to communication with district families. We received many emails and updates on the proper way to drop off children at the high school. The pathway was littered with signage to ensure student drop-off was efficient. However, no one cared to tell families that a student of the opposite sex could use the same bathroom as their child. The district still refuses to provide informed consent to this fact. Lastly, there is an outrageous accommodation expectation for our children. Over 600 female students attend Brecksville-Broadview Heights High School. They were denied access to their bathroom. They were required to make the accommodation. They were denied the same rights every legislator taking the time to read this had the privilege of enjoying as a student. Imagine if all 600 girls utilized the nurse's bathroom?

I will conclude my comments as an educator. Public education is spiraling into chaos; chaos crafted by grown-ups. Public schools are the heart of our communities; however, even in a district like Brecksville-Broadview Heights, families are seeking alternative options. Imagine being a fifteen-year-old girl who must focus on what bathroom to use instead of her Honors Biology class. Imagine being pulled out of class multiple times to have to justify wanting to go to the bathroom. Imagine being a teacher who has three minutes to use the bathroom between classes, but now those bathrooms are occupied by students and are mixed-gender. Imagine being a teacher who just wants to rigorously teach and engage students but instead gets inundated with the current cultural crisis and has students out of class for long periods as those students navigate to special bathrooms.

I am not unsympathetic to the challenges facing children. My heart hurts for students struggling with their identity. I am saddened by the fact our legislators must even take up a bill to do what we have historically known to be normal. But, we need you, our elected officials, to restore a bit of sanity and reduce the chaos. Protect the basic rights of our children to use their biological bathroom. Stop schools from demanding 600 girls use the nurse's bathroom. Demand transparency in our school districts and stop lawyers from treating our children as bad press to avoid. Stop the assault on traditional norms. Let teachers teach, and let students learn in our public schools.

With much respect,  
Melanie Kirin  
8552 Timber Trail  
Brecksville, Ohio 44141