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Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee
1 Capitol Square Columbus, OH 43215

Chairman Bird, Ranking member Robinson and members of the Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to House Bill 8. My name is Mallory Golski, and I use she/her pronouns. I'm the civic engagement and advocacy manager for Kaleidoscope Youth Center, Ohio's largest and longest standing organization serving and supporting LGBTQIA+ youth and young adults, ages 12-24.

Much has been said and will continue to be said today by social workers and other professionals about why this bill is unnecessary at best and dangerous at worst. I spoke to some of our KYC youth – students who would be directly impacted by this legislation – who expressed their thoughts on why they're against H.B. 8. While we have a couple of these folks here today, unfortunately, many are not to testify here in person, either because they're just getting out of school, they're not out yet or because being here could pose a risk to their safety. Here are just some of the comments they've shared:

"I feel this is very targeted toward LGBT youth. From my understanding their claim is to protect youth from gayness or whatever. By outing children to their parents, it's putting them in direct danger. You don't know how that parent is going to react. I know a lot of trans and gay people who aren't out to their parents for various reasons. You have to respect their time and their boundaries. Putting them in a situation that could lead to abuse... I just can't understand why that would even cross peoples' minds." - **15-year-old KYC youth**

"Being a minor sucks in this country. You're basically legally not a full human because you don't have the rights that everyone else has and just because people had sex and made you doesn't mean that they can responsibly take care of you or that they should know everything about you." - **17-year-old KYC youth**

“This bill will almost certainly lead to abuse. Every single person in support of this bill is choosing harm by choosing to put children’s safety in jeopardy in the name of ‘parents’ rights.’ A parent’s job is to provide a safe environment for their kids. This will create situations that are the exact opposite of that. It’s just not a good way to protect kids.” - 15-year-old KYC youth

“Coming out is a very personal process and that process can look very different for different people. Even as someone who is very safe as queer in my home, it took a long time for me to come out for various reasons and I would very much have hated it if that process had been interrupted. It’s a sign of a lot of trust if they come out to someone at school so that is a huge violation of that child’s trust if the government forces someone that the kid has confided in to break that boundary and tell parents, who may be putting the kid in emotional or even physical danger just because of something that they are.” - 16-year-old KYC youth

“If gay teachers talking about their families can be seen as ‘sexually explicit content,’ does that mean that straight teachers also have to take off their wedding rings? I know somebody who is queer and has talked to the social worker at our school about things that have happened because they are queer. They cannot come out because they think they could get kicked out from their parents. It’s good for a kid to have someone to talk to if they’re dealing with things who isn’t just another kid. That’s what social workers are for. That just defeats the purpose if they can just turn around to their parents and tell them and they get kicked out of their house because of it.” - 13-year-old KYC youth

“As someone who was almost outed to my parents by a teacher – I say almost because I already came out to my parents, just in case something like this happened – it really sucked, especially the way they talked about it. It felt like such a violation of my trust in them. They didn’t know my home situation. They told my parents that your kid uses this name and these pronouns. It was awful. It didn’t help anyone, and no matter if my parents were accepting or not, it only violates trust.” - 15-year-old KYC youth

“I don’t want this bill to pass because my mom is already way too involved in my life and I don’t have much privacy already and my mom already knows that I’m out but if that wasn’t the case I’d be scared for my life. I’d just feel invaded, ya know?” - 17-year-old KYC youth

I want you to think for a moment about the biggest secret you ever had to keep when you were in school. Maybe you had a crush on someone who was outside your league. Maybe you were failing geometry. Maybe you were sneaking out past curfew, experimenting with drugs or



changing your clothes once you got to school into something your parents maybe wouldn't have approved of. Maybe you were being bullied by someone – or maybe, you were the bully yourself.

At this point, you probably have already shared these stories with your parents – either at the time, or as a “What?? I can't believe I never told you...” anecdote over the dinner table decades later. But, I'm sure you can also remember a time when that autonomy was stripped from you when a teacher or other adult called home to break the news themselves. Remember how awful that felt? Or, maybe you still haven't told them these secrets, and that's okay, too. You deserve to have that right to privacy.

I don't want to liken the experience of being gay or transgender to that of getting a bad grade or breaking a rule, because there's nothing shameful or harmful about having these identities. But, the deep fear that some of the most important people in your life *could* respond to this revelation with similar – or worse – ridicule as the discipline that follows a legitimate wrongdoing is very much the same. That's why many LGBTQIA+ youth don't tell their parents these secrets, and that's okay. They *also* have that right to privacy.

Kaleidoscope Youth Center stands in firm opposition to House Bill 8. Young people are people who are entitled to their own privacy and secrets. Let's focus on legislation that will create safer environments for them to feel comfortable enough to share these parts of their lives – if and when they feel ready to.

Please vote no on House Bill 8. Thank you.

