

Dear Chairman Roegner, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, Senator George Lang, and Senator Rob McColley,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Alisa Ramakrishnan. I have two school-aged children and have lived in Dublin, Ohio for the past four years. I am strongly opposed to House Bill 83. Not everyone fits in a box - a significant number of people are intersex, queer, or neurodivergent. Youth who struggle with these challenges contribute to society when they are allowed to participate equally, and we should support all hard-working people who struggle to improve quality of life for everyone.

My family has personal experience with gender dysphoria. My cousin was born with both male and female genitalia, and doctors arbitrarily performed surgery on them as a tiny newborn baby to artificially assign them to female. Only with the intervention of modern medicine was my cousin finally able to live life authentically, as an intersex person. My cousin struggled for decades being labeled as a gender other than what my cousin felt was right. Only with acceptance by supportive segments of society are people like my cousin able to live free of that pain. They are now a chemist, contributing to discoveries that improve the lives of thousands of people.

Within living memory, people who were not attracted to the opposite sex were submitted to recurrent and systematic physical pain in order to try to force them to "change their minds." I have a good friend, now over 60 years old, who endured years of such torture in an attempt to "fix" himself. He got married to a woman and had children before finally realizing that no medical, mental or spiritual intervention would change how he felt and how his brain was built. He is now happily married to a man and advocates for acceptance and support instead of torture.

I have family members with ADHD who struggled to integrate into society. In my generation, 40 years ago, they were labeled as mentally deficient, rebellious, troublemakers, or just plain stupid. With acceptance, support, and appropriate medical care, they are now able to find ways of enjoying life and being of benefit to society.

I know several transgender and gender non-conforming youth. They are not deviants, perverts, drug addicts, abandoned, neglected, abused, or misled. They found their way to self-understanding through difficult and painful self-reflection as they struggled to find a way to stay alive in a biased and prejudiced society. The youth I know are kind, thoughtful, insightful, and more forgiving of other people's misunderstandings than most people I know. I think this is because they have seen so many sides of life. They understand what it is to be a boy and a girl, what it is to be treated poorly and to be treated well, they've been accepted and had to disappoint family members in order to find peace with themselves.

I applaud efforts by people from all walks of our society who support and uplift other members of our world who struggle to accept themselves and others. As we encourage each other to contribute to kindness and understanding, we will be able to focus on strengthening our families, schools, workplaces and places of worship. We will be able to form a resilient and self-reliant society that has the resources and insight to overcome the unbelievable challenges that lie ahead.

All people, especially children, deserve acceptance, support, and appropriate medical care.

With best regards,

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