

Subject: Testimony from an Ohio LGBTQ+ Parent Who Has Relocated Due to Discriminatory Legislation

To the Chair, Vice Chair, Ranking Member, and Members of the Senate Government Oversight Committee,

I write this testimony not only as a former resident of Ohio but also as a concerned parent within the LGBTQ+ community who felt compelled to leave the state due to the discriminatory legislation that has been put forth. I know many families living in Ohio who are also considering leaving, and more who already have. I can't tell you how bad my wife and I wish we could raise my children near my parents in Ohio. But, we can't. We had to make the difficult decision to flee in order to be legally protected. In fact, after a few harmful threats, we fled Ohio to stay alive. It's not an easy life, feeling like someone could legally hurt or even kill you at any moment.

It is disheartening to observe the extreme lack of decency and responsibility demonstrated by extremist wedge issues. The evident prioritization of these issues over the well-being of Ohio's diverse population is not only disgraceful but also counterproductive to fostering a decent society. A lack of protections is why my family fled 2 years ago. Instead of utilizing our tax dollars to sow misinformation and division, I implore you to consider redirecting those resources toward initiatives that Ohioans actually need and want.

The discrepancy between the attention given to anti-trans bills and the actual needs of Ohioans is glaring. While the legislature has passed a limited number of bills this year, an alarming number of hearings have been held on anti-trans bills alone. This disproportionate focus is not in line with the priorities of the majority of Ohioans, as evidenced by the overwhelming ratio of testimonies against these bills compared to those in favor.

Specifically addressing HB 68, I express my staunch opposition to this legislation. Banning gender-affirming healthcare and restricting transgender student participation in school sports sets a dangerous precedent. I wouldn't let a hair stylist change the oil on my car. That's what it feels like here. Like you are all a bunch of hair stylists trying to disguise yourselves as car technicians. Your role in these decisions makes no sense. Such interference in private medical decisions and extracurricular activities, which are already independently regulated, is unwarranted. I search for a word stronger than '*cruel*' here.

Moreover, the pairing of HB 68 and HB 6 makes no sense. The healthcare regulations and those pertaining to school sports have no common ground, except for their targeting of the transgender community. This conflation further underscores a clear lack of thoughtful consideration in the legislative process.

I urge you to reconsider your priorities while working in public office. The impact of these discriminatory bills on Ohio's residents, especially the transgender youth and their families who are contemplating leaving the state in pursuit of a more inclusive environment. Let us work together to build a future for Ohio that prioritizes equality, compassion, and the well-being of all its residents.

Sincerely, MD Sitzes, Former Ohio Resident and LGBTQ+ Parent