

Committees

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Primary and Secondary Education
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Boards, Commissions, & Special Committees:

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Ohio Facilities Construction Commission
Ohio Gun Violence Prevention Caucus, Co-Chair
Joint Legislative Ethics Committee
Business First Caucus

Jessica E. Miranda
Democratic Whip

Representative Miranda's House Bill 8 Floor Speech

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. House Bill 8 is a hateful attack on Ohio's teachers, and our children, especially those in the LGBTQ+ community.

My colleagues have introduced a piece of legislation that they believe will stop teachers from 'saying gay' in classrooms and force educators to 'out' their students. This thoughtless piece of legislation will restrict teachers' free speech and lesson flexibility.

It will prohibit teachers from talking about LGBTQ+ issues even if it is a part of a valid lesson or important subject matter for all viewpoints. And because of its overbroad writing, teachers will be forbidden from educating our youth about important life circumstances. Because whether you like it or not, the queer community is real – they are HUMAN – and we are here to stay. The OEA submitted a letter to ALL our offices and I want to emphasize that government mandates on matters that interfere with professionalism of educations and weaken the principles of local control of public schools.

Now because of its broad writing, under this bill, a single parent could weaponize this against an educator and stop them from explaining the hard-fought struggle for marriage equality and the freedom to marry who they love. This ensures Ohio children will never learn about *Loving v. Virginia*. And they may possibly never learn that the government cannot control who they wish to marry one day. Because under this bill marriage is 'sexually explicit content.'

Or a particular parent could file a complaint that their kindergartener shouldn't have *Goldie Locks and the Three Bears* read to them, because it references a momma bear and a papa bear.

With either of these scenarios, the fact is that this legislation is too broad and will create dangerous outcomes like the censorship of experienced educators and continue to drive these teachers out of this state; furthering our workforce problem with educators, healthcare heroes and so much more. But we all know that this is a part of a larger movement sweeping our country where they are trying to bully our LGBTQ children.

Yesterday in committee, they cut corners and restricted people's voices by making folks who wanted to debate the amendment submit written testimony only and gave them mere hours of

notice. We couldn't even deliberate. Other states have tried to implement comparable legislation to HB 8. So, this bill is not creative; it's an attempt to alienate the LGBTQ+ community.

The fact is, if you don't know this, parents already have control and rights to their children's education, and have for a long time. My children are in 1st, 8th, and 10th grades and I can call/text, email their educators anytime and they know it's an open door with me as well. This is yet again another glorious GOP waste of time. A waste of time that is bullying children and putting educators in compromising positions. And it will be struck down in the courts, like every other nonsensical, unserious, bit of culture war evangelizing legislation this body - and so many others across the nation- have tried to pass.

For those of you, my colleagues, who have queer family members and friends, I hope that if you press that green button today – you can go home and look them in the eye and say that you are okay with them and their children being bullied, outed, and attacked by hateful legislation crafted by out of touch and out of control lawmakers. Because this – HB 8 is the 1st step in a series of bills doing this to our children.

There is so much good that this honorable body could do. We have the power and funds to provide free meals to every child in our school systems. We have the power to implement state standards for health education – which Ohio is the only state in the Nation who does not have health curriculum standards. We have the power to make Ohio better, more inclusive and to make the future brighter for our children; but instead, we are wasting our time on this. A hateful bill that targets children for being who they are. You know, every time I see a bill like this – whether it is HB 8 – 68 – or 6, I think hate begets hate. I looked up that entire quote to remind myself of the power of these words.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said "Violence begets violence; hate begets hate; and toughness begets a greater toughness. It is all a descending spiral, and the end is destruction — for everybody. Along the way of life, someone must have enough sense and morality to cut off the chain of hate."

As a former school board president I don't want our educational outcomes to end in destruction; as a mom with children who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, and as your colleague... I urge to reach deep down inside of you, grab your humanity and remind yourself of what freedom truly is. I urge you to stop the chain of hate and I urge you to vote no on this bill.