

Chair Blessing III, Vice Chair Reineke, ranking minority member Clyde, and the members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee,

My name is Caitlin Phillips and I am a licensed social worker interning with Kaleidoscope Youth Center (KYC). I support legislation HB 160 being considered. I was born and raised in Central Ohio and have spent my life going to school and working in this state. I graduated from Ohio University with a BSW and upon graduation sought and obtained my license to practice social work to empower and aid those living within the communities of Ohio. I then moved back to Columbus to attend a graduate social work program at the Ohio State University, allowing me to intern with KYC.

At KYC, myself and other staff work to assist young people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Gender non-conforming to reach their full potential as unique individuals with a means to positively impact and thrive within the communities that they reside in. KYC is committed to bettering the lives of LGBTQ youth and their allies through advocacy, education, support, and engagement efforts with a multitude of stakeholders. The passage of HB 160 would affect the lives of LGBT youth in a positive way, by providing the necessary codification of anti-discriminatory policy so they do not have to face potential discrimination in future employment or housing as they become adults. I identify as queer and as such this legislation touches me in a personal way as well. The passage of this legislation would allow me to be free from apprehension that I would be fired from a job or lose potential housing due to the nature of my sexual orientation or gender identity.

Discrimination is an issue that not only affects LGBTQ persons living in our country, but our society as a whole. It is estimated that sixty-four billion dollars is lost annually due to Americans leaving the workforce due to discrimination. Protections could mediate this economic loss and encourage workers to stay or move to Ohio to continue to enhance our economy. Most Ohioans also currently support anti-discrimination policies, with three quarters in favor of instituting employment and housing laws, making it illegal to discriminate based upon being LGBT. Many businesses in Ohio presently have policies and rules that consist of non-discriminatory measures that are inexpensive, supportive, and do not place undue strain on the organization.

In sum passage of HB 160 would be a win for all Americans and Ohioans. Every individual, including LGBT persons, should have the right to safe housing and employment. We should treat those as we would wish to be treated, with dignity and respect. People should not have to acquiesce to fear because of who they are or who they love.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,

Caitlin Phillips, LSW