



Chair Blessing III, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Minority Member Clyde, and the members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee:

My name is Danielle Smith and I am the Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers – Ohio Chapter. NASW Ohio is in support of proposed House Bill 160, which, if implemented, will further the goal of promoting equality in our society by expanding the present list of protected classes. NASW Ohio promotes social justice and believes that all people have the right to live free from discrimination and harassment.

Some Ohio cities already protect our LGBTQ residents from discrimination, yet there are still many that do not. At this moment, it is entirely legal in parts of the state to deny someone employment, housing, services and public accommodations merely based on the suspicion that they are a part of the LGBTQ population. While there may fear the liability involved in expanding the list of protected citizens, I would challenge you to think of it from this perspective: at this moment, we are losing money due to discrimination. According to the Center for American Progress (2012), bias based on sexual orientation, gender expression & identity costs \$64 billion dollars annually due to the need to replace 2 million people who leave their jobs because of this injustice. That means businesses are spending much of their time and money to replace those workers. Adopting this piece of legislation will allow our businesses to focus on furthering their missions rather than expending most of their time seeking new employees. In addition, the Ohio Business Competes coalition (2017) affirmed that top companies, such as Facebook, are locating new offices in states that have comprehensive nondiscrimination laws for all workers, including sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. We need the entire state to be committed to protecting LGBTQ citizens to compete economically with other states by attracting and maintaining both talented, diverse workers and various businesses.

The passage of this bill will reinforce the idea that Ohio is a progressive state and is actively advancing toward the goal of equality for all people. Through *Social Work Speaks* (10<sup>th</sup> edition) NASW Ohio believes in equality for all people and supports policies and legislation that ban discrimination based on actual and perceived status of sexual orientation, gender expression & identity. This bill is a step in the right direction to upholding the equality of Ohioans, regardless of who they are or whom they love.