

EQUALITY TOLEDO

P.O. Box 2659
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www.equalitytoledo.org

January 19, 2018

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

My name is Elaine Korenich and I serve as the Board Chair for the nonprofit, Equality Toledo, in Toledo, Ohio. I am writing to you today in support of HB 160. We have served this region since 2004 and work with area businesses, churches, school systems, healthcare providers, and more when it comes to matters concerning the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender folks.

Before our organization was formed by several other smaller groups, the City of Toledo passed a Human Rights Ordinance in 1998. The ordinance protects Toledoans from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations. Since its passage, I believe it is imperative to point out, there have been no issues regarding public safety as a result. In fact, many area employers added their own additional protections because they see the value in all of their employees.

Currently, the law helps to protect citizens of Toledo or employees of companies based in Toledo, but it sadly doesn't protect those individuals when they return to their homes in surrounding suburbs or when Toledo LGBTQ residents enjoy businesses outside of Toledo limits. No matter where a person lives or visits, they should be free from discrimination and treated equally.

Families today are changing. No matter the makeup of a family, everybody should have the freedom to be able to work free from fear of discrimination in order to provide for their loved ones. We often hear from individuals in our area who seek assistance because their employer has let them go without warning because of their family make up. It breaks my

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heart when I learn that they live outside of Toledo. It's time for the rest of the state, and frankly for the state of Ohio, to catch up to what other states have already recognized—that protecting people from discrimination is not just the right thing to do, it is also the best thing for Ohio's economy.

I hope that you will strongly support HB 160. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. If you should have any questions, please feel free to contact me and Equality Toledo.

Respectfully,

Elaine Korenich
Board Chair
Equality Toledo