

Testimony for Public Hearing
House Accountability and Oversight Committee
January 31, 2018

Jacob B. Nash
1889 Ninth Street SW
Akron, Ohio 44314

Chair Blessing, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Minority Member Clyde, and the members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee: my name is Jacob Nash, and I support HB 160, being considered. Thank you for allowing me to speak today.

I am a female to male transgender individual; I share that today because it was a major reason why I was unemployed from 1999 thru 2014. My wife Erin's employment had to provide for my needs as well as her own. During this period, we lived in fear that her employer would find out she was married to someone who was transgender, and that she would lose her job, because there are no protections.

Due to my inability to find employment, and wanting to give my life purpose, in 2003 I decided to become more involved in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. I quickly realized there were few transgender individuals who were able to be "out," because of the very real consequences of losing their livelihood if they were. Many still hide who they are, due to that fear. A good friend who worked for a company for almost 30 years lost her job when she came out as transgender. She was good at what she did; her reviews were glowing; but once she informed her employer that she was transgender, they let her go! A person's qualifications, skills, and abilities should determine their fitness for a job—not that they happen to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender! The Center for American Progress has estimated the national cost of workplace discrimination is \$64 billion annually. This is the cost for businesses to replace more than 2 million Americans who leave their jobs or are fired because of workplace discrimination.

As a leader in the community, it has been a privilege and an honor to work very closely with numerous transgender individuals over the past 16 years; but it has saddened my heart to see so many of them living in poverty. Many of my friends have had to rely on survival sex to put food in their mouths and obtain a warm place to stay, if even just for one night. Most shelters still do not house transgender individuals because “they don’t know what to do with them.” My wife and I have had no less than a dozen young trans-identified individuals come and live with us because they found themselves homeless and unemployed merely because they are transgender. There are dozens and dozens more who don’t have an advocate or anyone to support them. They find themselves “unemployable” and with few options for survival because they are not protected. They can’t contribute to Ohio’s economy because they are not protected. They can’t provide for their families because they are not protected. It is a vicious cycle that you can help stop by passing House Bill 160.

Most Ohioans and Ohio businesses already support protections against discrimination ensuring that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are treated fairly on the job, and in housing. Updating the state’s nondiscrimination laws will eliminate loopholes to discrimination, such as denying a transgender person the dignity and human right to gainful employment or a roof over their heads.

I worked hard with other advocates in both Cleveland and Akron to help them add these same protections for the LGBTQ community and I am asking you now to do the same. 20 cities in Ohio already offer these protections, but it’s a patchwork—you can literally work in one place, live in another, and lose your rights on your morning commute.

This issue is personally important to me: though not a native Ohioan, I now call Ohio my home. Since Cleveland added these protections, I was offered a teaching position as an Adjunct Professor at the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University. I feel compassion for the rest of my LGBTQ family throughout Ohio, and I want them to be given the same opportunities that other Ohioans have. This issue is also

important to the State's economy and societal well-being. For these reasons, the State needs to pass this legislation and close the gaps in protection for all Ohioans.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you have.