



**Testimony of Jaime Miracle,
Deputy Director for NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio,
to the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee
Supporting H.B. 160
January 31, 2018**

Chairman Blessing, Ranking Member Clyde and members of the Government Accountability and Oversight committee, my name is Jaime Miracle. I am the Deputy Director for NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio. I am writing today in support of H.B. 160 on behalf of our over 40,000 activists and members across Ohio.

H.B. 160 is important to our organization for many reasons. As a social justice organization we firmly believe that all residents of our state should be treated equally and should be protected against discrimination. Additionally, as an organization that advocates for individuals to be able to create, or not create, a family on their own terms and in their own ways, we firmly believe that all individuals and families must be protected from discrimination.

NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio is also an employer in this state. It is important to us to be able to protect our employees from discrimination. Our organizational policies protect our employees from discrimination in our workplace, and our offices are located in two municipalities that protect individuals from discrimination because of real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Our office locations are in these areas on purpose to protect our employees as much as we possibly can. But outside of these areas our employees and their families are still unprotected from discrimination. Our employees shouldn't lose their protections on their commute home each day.

We aren't alone in this belief. Nearly three-quarters of Ohioans favor laws that protect individuals from discrimination in employment and housing. Of the top 98 employers in the state, 80 already have non-discrimination policies that protect LGBT employees. Recruiting top employees and top companies to Ohio should be our focus, and H.B. 160 will go a long way to making that happen.

As an individual who would be protected by this legislation, I also understand H.B. 160 is about so much more than what is written on its pages. Living in a state where elected officials are willing to make a statement and pass a bill like H.B. 160 is worth so much more than just the legal protections it will confer. It sends a message to LGBT Ohioans that at a basic level the majority of the members of the Ohio Legislature believe that we shouldn't face discrimination just for being who we are. It won't stop discrimination from happening, but it says that Ohio will not tolerate this behavior any longer. It says that Ohio will protect its citizens.

Protecting people from discrimination is the right thing to do. It is right for our economy. It is right for employers. It is right for employees. It is about treating people the way we want to be treated. All Ohioans should be protected equally under Ohio's law. This bill is an important first step to ensuring that happens.

Thank you for your consideration. We urge a yes vote on H.B. 160.