

Chair Blessing III, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Minority Member Clyde, and the members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, my name is Jim Sanders, owner of Pride Perfect Weddings, Pride Perfect Business, and Jim Sanders Photography, and I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 160.

I was not always the man you see before you today. When I was a younger man, I was a very religious person with strict fundamentalist views on marriage and equality. With these beliefs, I would never have accepted anything other than the bond between a man and a woman as a true marriage. I was adamantly opposed to even the thought of two men or two women joining in marriage. These were people I could not accept in any facet of my life.

Clearly, this is not who I am today. I am no longer that young man who could never believe he would one day own a business that is openly friendly to the LGBTQ community and provides direction to other such businesses. My views have grown and adapted. My old, narrow views on society have grown as my experiences and friendships have expanded.

Though I am still conservative in many aspects, I believe in a person's rights and their freedom to love whom they choose, to legally share their lives with the partner of their choice. I believe in their right to find a place that will not turn them away or make them feel any less important than a heterosexual couple.

Pride Perfect Weddings is a place where couples looking to get married can find likeminded wedding vendors that will accept and treat them just like any other couple seeking a wedding service. We are a place where they would not have to worry about being turned away due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. No person should feel the profound effects of discrimination when planning the happiest day of their lives, or at any other time.

Ohio is full of diverse communities. Ohio has the potential to grow and become a leader not just in business, but in its fair and equitable treatment of all its citizens. Do not let these opportunities to become that leader pass us by because we could not give our citizens the rights and fair treatment that ought to be guaranteed for everyone. I feel it is time that Columbus and Ohio stands up and enacts these truths lawfully. This is not asking for special treatment, this is ensuring their fair and equal treatment under the law.

Thank you for your time and consideration.