

Chair Blessing III, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Minority Member Clyde, and the members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, my name is Lana Moore and I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak here today.

On March 16th, 2016, I retired from the Columbus Division of Fire after 35 years of service. The last 15 years of my career I served as Captain. On Thanksgiving Day, 2008, I called my crew at the firehouse to the kitchen and I came out to them as transgender. As you might imagine, it was a very gut-wrenchingly hard thing to do. I spent the last eight years of my career as a female Fire Captain.

When I came out to the Fire Chief, Ned Pettus Jr., I'll never forget he told me three things. Number one, "I support you, but I can't give you special treatment." Number two, "I won't tolerate any harassment." And finally, number three, he said, "I want you to be a success story." That was so incredibly inspirational to me because, you see, Chief Pettus himself was a tremendous success story, being the first African American Fire Chief of the Columbus Division of Fire. He knows what it means to have one's skills questioned and scrutinized because of something that has nothing to do with one's ability to do their job.

We live in a diverse Society. That is a beautiful fact that will not change. Chief Pettus understood this and he wasn't the only one. I received support from my entire chain of command; from then Mayor Michael B. Coleman, then Safety Director Mitchell Brown and our Union president Jack Reall. Yet, there are over 1,500 members of the Columbus Division of Fire, so it wasn't a walk in the park at first. No firefighter had ever transitioned on the job before me and it took a while for some people to realize that my being trans was not a barrier for me being able to serve.

It was once related to me after I first came out, at the labor union's executive board meeting there were a few firefighters who sarcastically asked, "What are we going to do about Captain Moore?" This is when Mr. Reall stood up and exhibited strong leadership by responding, "What do you mean, what are we going to do about her? She's our sister and she's a human being and we are going to treat her as such." It's amazing how many so-called barriers can quickly disappear when good leaders take a strong stance for inclusion, respect, civility, and dignity.

Emergency First Responders put their lives on the line to Secure Public Safety and promote the general welfare of the people. LGBTQ folks serve in numerous important capacities all across our society and legal protections against discrimination is the least we can do to give them the full opportunity to contribute to and further advance the well-being of our communities. When these values are made to be common sense and indisputable expectations, as they were by the leadership my fire division here in Columbus, LGBTQ employees are encouraged to feel safe and empowered and reach their full potential, thereby becoming healthier more productive contributors to the workplace.

Unfortunately, my story is not common. Many people don't get the level of support that I was so fortunate to receive. Most trans people, when they come out, lose everything: they lose their families, they lose their jobs, their income, and oftentimes they find themselves on the streets because of discrimination. Transgender people, and particularly transgender women of color, are disproportionately affected by violence. Sadly, the tragedy of these incidents is often compounded by reporting that does not respect (or, sometimes, even exploits) the victim's gender identity. Without protections from discrimination, these people are easily viewed as "fair game."

According to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 55% of all reported LGBTQ homicide victims were transgender women, and 50% were transgender women of color. Furthermore, in the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, 78% of transgender/gender non-conforming students in grades K-12 experienced harassment, while 35% experienced physical assault and 12% experienced sexual violence. This is what happens when we don't protect the most marginalized in our communities from discrimination.

Since my retirement, I have kept myself very busy with advocacy work. I serve nationally on the Board of Directors for GLAAD (an LGBTQ media advocacy organization). Locally, I serve as a board member for BRAVO - The Buckeye Region Anti-Violence Organization, and I'm a board member for the Legacy Fund of The Columbus Foundation. I have also volunteered as a mentor for Franklin County CATCH Court, which is a two-year probationary program for women who are survivors of human trafficking. Throughout all my advocacy work, I can say that what drives me most is LGBTQ youth. I want them to have a future where they can live the life they love. They deserve the same level of equality that I have enjoyed throughout my life. It is my belief that in a country that boasts freedom, there can be no more precious a freedom than the freedom of expression of who you are, and who you love. Without these essential freedoms, I contend that none of us are truly free people. The City of Columbus got it right with me, and they have it right in the City's non-discrimination statutes. Let's spread that throughout Ohio, and let Ohio lead the way for the rest of our country.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions.