

Laurah Hallock

Manager, Ronin Training Center

House Bill 160 Testimony

September 5, 2017

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

My name is Laurah Hallock. I am the current manager of Ronin Training Center, a martial arts and fitness gym located in Grandview, Ohio. As an Ohioan and member of Ohio Business Competes, I am writing to express my support for House Bill 160 (The Ohio Fairness Act). This bill will protect LGBT Ohioans from discrimination in the community and the workplace, which will in turn promote business prosperity and equal rights for all Ohio citizens regardless of their sexual orientation.

As the manager of Ronin Training Center, I pride our business on its firm stance against discrimination and its involvement in the local community. Ronin Training Center has coordinated self-defense seminars geared towards LGBT individuals and has been an active participant in Columbus Ohio's Pride festival. From a business perspective, this bill has obvious potential to enhance our state's economy. Ohioans who feel discriminated against by archaic and prejudiced business practices will gladly take their business elsewhere, and rightfully so. As someone who has worked tirelessly to develop a successful business, I understand the importance of creating an atmosphere that welcomes all Ohioans regardless of their orientation.

The business and economic benefits to be gained from the passing of this bill are obvious. The moral justification for passing this bill is equally obvious, if not more so. Discrimination based on race, religion, creed, gender or sexual identification is always wrong. All Ohioans deserve equal rights. Upon its passing, this bill will give legal protection to Ohio's LGBT community- a community that deserves the same protections as everybody else.

The majority of Ohio businesses have already enacted policies that prohibit LGBT discrimination. Out of the top 98 employers listed by JobsOhio, 80 have enacted non-discrimination policies. However, there is still a need for this bill. One nationwide study found that 62% of gay and lesbian individuals and 94% of bisexual individuals were uncomfortable or feared coming out to their coworkers/employers.^a Another found that 78% of transgendered individuals experienced some form of harassment in the workplace.^b Unfortunately, harassment and bias towards LGBT individuals is still commonplace in America. However, by passing HB160 Ohio can set a leading example and take a stance firm against discrimination.

As you continue to consider this bill, I would encourage you to think about the citizens you represent. They all deserve equal treatment in the eyes of the law, and this is an excellent

opportunity for you to tell Ohioans that you stand with *all* of them. Passing this bill will give Ohio a strong economic advantage, promoting business with all individuals and ensuring that nobody feels unwelcome in our state. LGTB individuals are Ohioans just like you and me, and it's time for Ohio to give them the fair treatment they deserve. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Laurah Hallock

Manager, Ronin Training Center

- A. HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN, DEGREES OF EQUALITY REPORT 5 (2009), available at http://www.hrc.org/documents/HRC_Degrees_of_Equality_2009.pdf.

- B. JAIME M. GRANT, LISA A. MOTTET, JUSTIN TANIS, JACK HARRISON, JODY L. HERMAN, AND MARA KEISLING, NATIONAL CENTER FOR TRANSGENDER EQUALITY & THE GAY AND LESBIAN TASK FORCE, INJUSTICE AT EVERY TURN: A REPORT OF THE NATIONAL TRANSGENDER DISCRIMINATION SURVEY 51 (2011), available at http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_full.pdf.