

HB160 Testimony
January 31, 2018

My name is Laura Myers. I live in Athens, Ohio.

I was born and raised in southeastern Ohio and educated at Ohio University and The Ohio State University. I am an attorney by profession and a higher education administrator at Ohio University. I write today on behalf of my family, not my employer. I am personally committed to the betterment of the state of Ohio and the financial wellbeing of my region. I am a member of the Equality Ohio 501(c)(4) Board.

My husband and I, together with our family, support passage of HB160. We have three children – two in college and one in high school. Our oldest daughter Megan will graduate from college in May of this year. She plans to stay in the state of Ohio to work and attend graduate school. Megan is smart, compassionate, a hard worker, and hopes to eventually settle down in Ohio as her father and I have done. Megan is engaged to be married to another, equally smart, compassionate, and hardworking young woman on July 1, 2018 – the same day as my wedding anniversary, and my parents before me.

As Megan's parents, each day we consider how her life will be if she stays in this state. Will she and her wife be able to secure housing and employment? Will she and her wife be able to live their lives without literal and figurative doors closing to them because of their relationship and marriage? Will they be safe?

As a parent ally, I am here today on behalf of my daughter and also on behalf of your sons and daughters, and all other people, young and old, who are residents of this great state or who seek to move here, to do business here, and to contribute to our society openly, honestly, and without fear of harm or legal exclusion.

Non-discrimination laws and policy are an important part of creating safe and inclusive learning, living, and working environments and strong communities. Our great state includes people from all walks of life, from every country in the world, with different beliefs, passions, talents, and skills. All seek to live freely, to be judged by their character and contributions to society. Our state's economic interests are well-served by making it clear that we want the best and brightest, the most innovative, the most passionate, that we welcome all who seek to work and contribute to our economy, our industries, our educational and health care systems. We do not want to turn away talent and dedication simply by denying the most basic of freedoms – to live and love, to marry and raise a family without fear.

As a lifelong resident and voter, it is so heartening to know that there is such support among our legislature to clarify that Ohio is a safe, welcoming, and inclusive state. Honorable members of this committee, as a lawyer, educator, life-long resident of southeastern Ohio, and Megan's mom, I urge you to support HB160.