

Good afternoon, Chair Blessing III, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Minority Member Clyde, and the members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee. My name is Linda Nix and I am here in support of HB 160. I am a 41-year resident of Ohio. I graduated from Miami University with a degree in nursing and have been a registered nurse for over 28 years. I also served with pride for over eight years in the U.S. Army, Ohio National Guard and U.S. Army reserves. I have been married for almost 25 years and am a proud mother of a third generation Miami University freshman. I was born into a lower class family with an alcoholic father but my family's faith, strength and courage allowed them to rise up and work themselves up to a middle class status while raising 6 kids.

I didn't understand the position and privilege I was raised in until February, 2015, when our child told us she was transgender. That moment was when it all came into focus. Never before did I consider the possibility that my child would be denied employment, housing or financial security simply because of who he is. That's because before that day, it wasn't even on my radar. The comfort of my middle class bubble prevented me from thinking my child might be subject to prejudice, persecution or hate simply for being himself.

Alex is very fortunate to have the support of his family and friends because many transgender people do not. He has received very little backlash, but every time he's applied for a job, we've had to have discussions about what should and should not be disclosed to protect himself while still giving truthful information. We stopped going to church because the youth pastor told Alex he had to go to the small group sessions based on his body parts and not his true internal identity.

We struggle with simple things like applying for financial aid for college because his birth certificate states "female," but all his other identification, including social security, lists him as "male," putting him at risk of missing crucial opportunities because of these discrepancies. Medical insurance is another thing that we still don't know what to do about. If we list him as male, will pap smears or other medical tests be denied? When someone requires a birth certificate for a job or background check, what will the results be?

I had no idea that Ohio didn't have non-discrimination laws in place for sexual orientation and gender identity until it affected my son. I have grown to love being an Ohioan and Ohio truly is my home, but we need to do better than we are. We have seen that there are consequences for discrimination that take many forms. People want to live in a place that respects who you are and allows you to live equally without fear of retribution. Businesses support equality and failure to pass this bill sends a message to

everyone that Ohio isn't willing to protect all of its citizens. This isn't about special treatment, it's about basic rights, and I believe you will choose the right path for our state, our citizens and my family.

Thank you all for allowing me to address this committee and if you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them.