



November 30, 2017

Ohio House of Representatives  
77 S. High Street  
Columbus, OH 43215

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

It is my understanding that the Ohio House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee is considering HB160 (also known as the Ohio Fairness Act) that would add sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression to Ohio's existing list of protected classes, thereby extending civil rights protections to all LGBTQ Ohioans.

I commend you as our state elected officials for taking measures to ensure equality for all our citizens.

In June 2016, the Lakewood Chamber of Commerce followed the developments of a similar human rights ordinance that was in front of our city council. We supported this legislation and are proud that the ordinance passed unanimously and has been adopted.

Our organization's mission is to serve the interests of the local business community. Therefore, our perspective when examining this type of legislation is to determine whether it is fair to all businesses, and whether compliance is reasonably within their ability. It is our opinion that this legislation only extends current civil rights protections to another protected class. It is not overly complicated to comply with, and that the remedies are fair and not excessively punitive.

We also believe that this ordinance is good for business. Our research indicates that an inclusive approach to service and employment is critical to establishing a positive work culture, which leads to higher productivity and higher profits. The ordinance also strengthens an employer's human resource policies, thus helping with the attraction and retention of qualified employees.

To date, Lakewood has not had a complaint filed under our 2016 human rights ordinance. We continue to discuss the ordinance and compliance with local merchants and have found that our business citizens want to do what is right, and what is good for business.

The Lakewood Chamber of Commerce supports equality for all. I urge you to approve this legislation to include the LBGTQ community as a protected class in Ohio.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Patricia L. Ryan".

Patricia L. Ryan  
CEO & President  
Lakewood Chamber of Commerce