

Chair Blessing III, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Minority Member Clyde, and the members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee:

My name is Paul Nierzwicki, I am a resident of Columbus, and I support the passage of HB160. Originally from Illinois, I came to Ohio at the age of 18 to attend Kenyon College, and I have been proud to call this state home ever since. I have had the opportunity to live and work in both Columbus and Cleveland, as a second-grade teacher, and am now attending The Ohio State University to receive my MBA, where I am in my second and final year of the program. I have truly loved living in Ohio over the last eight years, and am proud to call myself a Buckeye. There is so much to love about this state! Ohioans are some of the hardest-working, kindest people I have met. From Cincinnati to Cleveland, there is so much to do. And yes, I have even come to love the unpredictable weather.

While living in Ohio, I met my boyfriend, Brian, who is also a transplant to Ohio but now proudly calls the Buckeye State his home. We have been together for three years. As my MBA program comes to an end, I have begun the process of looking for full-time employment. While plenty of excellent job opportunities exist right here in Columbus, as well as across Ohio, I am scared. I am scared for my boyfriend and myself, and what a future in Ohio would look like, where we can get married on a Friday and fired the next Monday simply for being gay. I am afraid of walking into an interview and not being able to be my full self, for fear of not getting a call back. I am afraid of starting a job in a state where I potentially can be fired for just being myself, or worse, being forced to be someone I am not. There are others in my MBA program who are struggling with the same reality. You have the power to change this reality, to allow the many highly educated transplants who now see themselves as nothing but Ohioans, truly feel welcome and safe.

Brian and I have come to love Ohio so much, and we would love to raise a family in a state that has given us so much. Please don't make us leave. Thank you for your time and consideration.