

Chair Blessing III, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Minority Member Clyde, and the members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, my name is Rachael Jarvis, and I appreciate the opportunity to address you to today.

I am here today with my husband, Curtiss, and my daughter, Alecia. We are a typical family living here in the Columbus area. Like any parents we want to keep our child safe as she learns and grows into the amazing young woman we know she will be.

Unlike other parents, we have to worry much more about our daughter's safety, her mental health and even her civil rights simply because of who she is; because is transgender.

It is a sign that something is wrong, that something needs to be fixed, when parents in America have to worry about the safety and civil rights of their child. That is something we think happens in OTHER countries, ones that don't have our history, our Constitution, our enduring belief in freedom.

This is the country that was inked into creation with the words "We the People" and "All Men are Created Equal", truths we claim are self-evident. Unfortunately, right now they are not so evident because a large number of Americans face discrimination, harassment and violence daily through no fault of their own.

Some people may think that this isn't really an issue. To those people I ask what if it were your child? What if society told your child that there was something wrong with them? What if they were harassed or discriminated against? What if your child was told that they could not use the restroom, don't deserve to play sports or attend public school, for simply being themselves? Imagine your adult child being told that they are being evicted from their apartment, fired from their job or denied health insurance and it was all legal?

What if the reason they are allowed to do this is because your daughter has brown hair or your son has green eyes? Would that be okay with you as a parent, as a politician, as a human being? If someone told you that your child doesn't deserve the same rights and protections as everyone else, how angry and scared would you be?

I tell you this because that is what it is like for parents of transgender kids. You don't base your love for your kids on something as silly as eye or hair color, you love THEM. It is the same way for us; we love our daughter and feel lucky she trusted us enough to come out. We want her to have a "normal" life with the same challenges and opportunities, successes and failures, love and respect as anyone else. Unfortunately, we don't feel confident that she CAN have that life because of the lack of protections for her civil rights.

Currently, there are no federal or state protections for those of us that identify as LGBTQ, and that is a huge problem. While we are lucky enough to live in Columbus where they have passed laws protecting LGBTQ people from discrimination, it isn't like that for 90% of Ohio.

Right now, LGBTQ anti-discrimination laws are, at best, a thin patchwork that change depending on the city, township or county you are in. Depending on where you live determines if your boss can fire you for being gay, or your landlord can evict you for being transgender. Currently, transgender employees that work for the state cannot be discriminated against, but if you work for a private company, it is legal. If our legislature felt it was important enough to protect State Employees, then the protection should apply to everyone.

In 1964 the United States Government passed the Civil Rights Act protecting the rights of every American regardless of race, religion, gender or nation of origin. Now, in 2018, we look back at that and rightfully feel ashamed. We wonder how it took us so long to do the right thing. The fact is, in 1964 the Civil Rights Act was

not popular with many American Citizens or Members of Congress. A 54-day filibuster delayed voting in the Senate and then a last-ditch 14-hour filibuster was attempted in the House. Can you imagine one of your peers taking the floor and talking for 14 hours, trying to convince you that racism and sexism are acceptable? I want you to take a minute please, close your eyes and for the next 5 seconds of silence and actually picture and HEAR what that would sound like. Were you able to imagine that? It is pretty ugly, isn't it?

We stand at a very similar precipice, at another important point in history and you are the people that get to make this monumental decision. Now I want you to imagine 54 years in the future, when your grandchildren and great grandchildren will look back at THIS moment in history. Will they be proud of you? Will they be able to say that you were on the right side of history?

If we want to continue to evolve towards a more perfect union, we must be willing to stand up for what is right and unequivocally state that everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity; that no one has the right to harass, fire, evict or discriminate against anyone else. We must proudly insist that EVERY Ohioan has the same inalienable civil rights that this country is founded on.

I leave you now with the words of Senator Everett Dirksen, his final entreaty to his fellow Senators to pass the Civil Rights Act. In the words of Victor Hugo, he proclaimed "Stronger than all the armies is an idea whose time has come". He continued "The time has come for equality in sharing government, in education and in employment. It will not be stayed or denied, it is here".

That was fitting 54 years ago, and it is just as fitting today.

Please vote Yes on House Bill 160 and send a message that EVERY person, every child matters.

Send the message that hate and discrimination are not family values, and they aren't Ohio values either.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.