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

My name is Randy Webb and I'm a resident of Olmsted Falls, Ohio. I am President and a Partner at Beacon Gasket & Seals Co. in Lakewood, Ohio, and I am speaking by proxy as a member, board member, and founder for the 475 members of Dover United Church of Christ in Westlake, the 110 members of the North Coast Men's Chorus in Cleveland, the 100 members of PFLAG Cleveland, the 44 members of PFLAG Akron and the 25 members of I AM, Inclusion Affirmation Ministry in Westlake. I'm here to give voice to these many supportive organizations who could not otherwise be here today.

I am the proud father of a lesbian, Christian, and ally to the LGBTQ community. And I'm here to support House Bill 160.

3 years ago, one of my daughters came out to us as gay. Leading up to that point, fear kept her in the closet, hiding from the bullies at school, and from herself. The closet can be a dangerous place. In our case, self-harm happened in that closet. Today, she is out, she is strong, she is proud of who she is, and her mother and I could not be more proud of the woman she is becoming.

When my daughter was around 12 years old, she went from being the boisterous, happy, funny daughter we had always known and became quiet and dark, spending most of her free time alone. We would force her to come with us shopping or to an event (e.g. church, etc.), but she would always return to her room. I thought, 'could it be teenage angst? Was she finding herself?' You also need to know that she was a sickly child, afflicted with many colds, sinus and ear infections – more than the average girl her age. Around that time, she became sicker, causing her to miss extreme amounts of school. The doctors were stumped by her extreme, chronic, debilitating, and inexplicable pains. Unknown to her mother and I, she was also self-harming during that time.

In June of 2014, my amazing daughter came out to our family, and by that fall, she was healthy and enjoying life again. It was horrible to learn that because she was afraid to come out to us and to be honest with herself, she was eating herself alive.

That fear is real! It is real in the LGBTQ community. The fear that because of who you are, you can be discriminated against, resulting in the loss of your job and the denial of housing and public services. Even worse is the fear of loss of family, community, and even their lives.

In June of 2016, we were at the Pittsburgh Pride Parade when we learned of the Pulse Night Club tragedy in Orlando. There is no way to fully protect your LGBTQ child, friend, family member, or employee from the horrors of this world – to keep them safe at all times, to constantly watch over them.

But here in Ohio, you, our legislators and representatives, have the ability to make our lives a little fairer. Like other marginalized groups who are protected against discrimination in Ohio's laws, you have the opportunity to protect the rights of LGBTQ people to housing, employment, and public accommodations.

This bill has my support, the support of the Beacon Gasket & Seals Co. and its owners, and the support of the 754 people for which I am proxy. Please pass HB160 and make Ohio a safer place for everyone.

Thank you,

Randy Webb, Life-long Ohioan