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

My name is Stacy Drake, and I have lived and worked in Ohio for nearly 24 years, graduating with a bachelor's degree from Capital University in 2010. I am in full support of, HB 160, currently being considered. My husband, who is a native Ohioan, and I have three daughters—one who is 24 and a 2015 graduate of The Ohio State University (OSU) and twins who are 18, one in her freshman year at OSU and one in her freshman year at Columbus State Community College. All three of them graduated from Hilliard Darby High School and are part of Ohio's LGBTQ+ community.

I believe strongly in equal rights for all people and especially in the communities in which my daughters study and work. Unfortunately, it is not enough for me to say that most Ohioans and Ohio businesses support protections against LGBTQ+ discrimination. While that may be true, it is also true that my oldest daughter, who lives in Columbus, loses her protection against discrimination when she drives to the city in which she is employed. Because of the lack of protection in Ohio, my daughter has considered moving out of the State. **She has lived in Ohio since she was eight months old and can make a contribution to the workplace using the education she earned here, yet she is not protected from discrimination in most of Ohio, simply because of whom she loves.** Every Ohioan, including my daughter(s), should have the opportunity to work hard, to be judged on their performance and contribution, and to provide for themselves and their families. Ohio needs to close the gaps in discrimination law in order to retain workers, including my daughters, and to attract new business to the State.

All three of my daughters have already faced discrimination because of who they are. Discrimination of any kind comes at a great cost for all Ohioans—both economic and human. Workers leave places of employment due to discrimination, and corporations are reluctant to move to states in which these types of discrimination are not expressly covered by law. While my twins are currently enrolled and work in institutions in Columbus that are inclusive and covered by Columbus' LGBTQ+ nondiscrimination law, pursuing housing or employment in other parts of Ohio, where they can be discriminated against, makes it tempting for them to move to a state where they will be protected. The ability of Ohio to attract employers to the State also limits my daughters' employment opportunities within Ohio.

Any type of discrimination is wrong. Laws like HB160 are necessary to protect LGBTQ+ Ohioans. With this law in place, my daughters will be free to live and work anywhere in Ohio, without fear of discrimination based on who they love and/or their gender identity. All Ohioans should be treated equally regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, and/or religion. This law is important to me because my daughters and all Ohioans deserve equitable and fair treatment, opportunities to seek and retain housing and employment, and to pursue happiness and stability within their families.

Protecting people from discrimination, including the LGBTQ+ community, is about treating others as we would want to be treated. My daughters deserve the same opportunities that every Ohioan enjoys, without fear of discrimination or harassment for their personal lives, affections, and/or beliefs. This is about respect for each other, our children, our coworkers, and our neighbors. It is fundamental to Ohio's growth and economy as well as our standing within the United States. Ohio needs to retain its talented and educated workers. HB160 will help achieve that goal.

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