

Chair Blessing III, Vice Chair Reineke, ranking minority member Clyde, and the members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, my name is Dr. Tayo Clyburn, an African American, transgender parent, partner, and employee, and I support HB160, the legislation under consideration.

I moved to Columbus, Ohio when I was 21 years old and have been here ever since. Having come from a military family that moved every 2 – 3 years for most of my life, I never had a place that I called “home” until I made my way to Ohio. I came here for graduate study in English at The Ohio State University where I completed my MA and PhD and where I continue to work as a senior administrator and advocate for diversity and inclusion in higher education.

I was educated here. I bought my first home here. And with my partner of seven years, I started a family here. My wife went into labor on June 23rd 2015 — my 35th birthday. Two days later, our daughter, Alena Ivy Clyburn, was born. I remember when she was only two days old, strapping her into her car seat that had taken me more than an hour to install. It was a rainy summer day in Columbus, and I remember driving an overly cautious 15 miles per hour all the way home—she was so small, and so precious that I was scared that even the smallest bump or pothole would hurt her. Alena is two and a half years old now, and though she is not nearly as fragile as I thought she was, I spend a good portion of my waking hours trying to protect her.

As I am sure that many of you know, parenthood is by its nature always already a precarious undertaking. There are a great many perils from which we want to protect our children but cannot. But we do our best to provide for them, giving them any benefits that we can—a safe home, good doctors, and a financially secure future. But there are many parents who based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression, face an added dimension of precarity, stemming wholly from the discriminatory policies and practices of others. They do not have access to these benefits themselves and therefore are unable to extend them to their children. Expanding legal protections in housing, employment, and access to public services to gender and sexual minorities not only shields those individuals from identity-based discrimination, it protects Ohio families, and in turn, Ohio’s future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.