

Chair Blessing III, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Minority Member Clyde, and the members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, my name is Vera Campbell and I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 160.

As a transwoman living in Cleveland, I've experienced harsh, humiliating, and dehumanizing discrimination while participating as a consumer in Ohio's economy. I'd like to share my experiences with you in the hopes that the need for non-discrimination legal protections here in Ohio will be made clear.

Several months ago, my wife and I took our three children to the I-X Indoor Amusement Park in the hopes of spending a fun and memorable day with the family. About halfway through our day, my wife and three daughters stopped to use the women's restroom. I waited outside until I noticed by six-year-old hovering near the entrance, looking upset and confused. She needed help undoing her overall straps so that she could use the restroom. I attempted to go inside and help her but was stopped by an I-X employee who demanded to know what was going on with my daughter. When I explained that my daughter just needed some assistance, she barred my entry to the bathroom, preventing me from reaching my daughter.

Standing between my daughter and me, the employee said, "I'm sorry *sir*, but you can't go in there." I corrected her misuse of my pronouns and asked why I wasn't allowed to enter the restroom to help my child. She answered, "I can't let you in because there are women and young children in there."

I explained that I am a woman and that my six-year-old, still needing to use the restroom, is one of those young children. By now, my wife and other two kids had exited the bathroom and were similarly upset with the employee's discriminatory behavior. She continued to misgender and insult me in front of my family, barring my entry to the bathroom and threatening to call security if we continued to press the issue.

As three security guards approached, my eight-year-old daughter stood by my side, her arms crossed, muttering "this isn't right." The employee explained the situation to the guards, continuing to misgender me. My children were visibly upset, and I was angry and thoroughly humiliated. The security officers suggested that I use a different bathroom in another part of the building.

The unfair and cruel treatment that my family and I endured because of my transgender identity has no place in civil society. It's time to make discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression illegal in employment, housing, and public accommodations. LGBTQ Ohioans ought to be able to work, live, and spend their money just like everyone else without fear of harassment or persecution. We just want fairness – nothing more, and nothing less.

I urge you to pass House Bill 160.