

Testimony of Cynthia Vermillion, Resident of Hilliard, Ohio, for the Ohio House Civil Justice Committee Hearing on HB369.

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Minority Member Brown, and the members of the House Civil Justice Committee:

Can any of you imagine living your life in the shadows? What do I mean by that? Imagine you are applying for the job of your dreams. You have all the qualifications and experience the employer is seeking. You hit it off with the people you interviewed with. This would be an amazing opportunity to use your hard-earned college degree. With this new salary, you could think of buying a home. You receive the longed-for phone call—you have the job! Of course, everything needs to check out in your background and drug test. The drug test will be a breeze to pass. The background check, however, makes you a little nervous. You look like a man to everyone who meets you. But, you know that you were raised as a girl. It's on your birth certificate. Your future employer gets back to you in a few days and has decided to rescind the offer. She doesn't believe in people "changing their gender." "It's not normal." Your first reaction is how unfair and illegal this is. Unfortunately, you discover this unfair decision is perfectly legal. It's legal because you live in Ohio. And this particular city has zero protections for LGBTQ people who are discriminated against. Back into the shadows you go until the next opportunity.

I have two beautiful daughters who identify as LGBTQ. They are talented and amazing people. The thought of them being denied employment or housing or a wedding cake simply because of who they are breaks my heart. I listened to very moving testimony in 2018 in support of HB 160. People in your state are being fired, thrown out into the street, and being treated unjustly simply because of who they are. As legislators, you have a very real opportunity to make an impactful difference in the lives of many Ohioans. People are looking for true leadership from their Ohio government. Businesses are looking for courageous leadership that will allow them to offer security to their workforce. True leadership means protecting people against hurtful discrimination. I urge you to, in the words of many churches, choose the right thing and stand up for your fellow Ohioans. Please pass House Bill 369 so that my daughters and the children of many other mothers in this state can sleep at night knowing their children have a place to lay their head each night and an opportunity to be successful in life. Thank you.