

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Minority Member Brown, and the members of the House Civil Justice Committee, my name is Elaine Schleiffer and I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act.

I am a Cleveland homeowner, a community organizer, and someone who came out as queer later in life. This means that I spent many years renting apartments, interviewing for jobs, and accessing resources as someone who appeared straight and cisgender. Over the past few years, as my queer identity has become public, I have seen how discrimination can impact all areas of life for folks who are queer.

I have been questioned by landlords who want to know who is visiting my apartment, and who my partner is, and who worry about my relationship making the neighbors uncomfortable. I have been told by managers and employers that I shouldn't talk about my personal life in the workplace, but when I was dating someone of the opposite gender, I never received any feedback about sharing anecdotes about myself with my colleagues.

I am lucky that I have been able to maintain continual employment, and I have never been evicted; but I have experienced insults, invasive questions, assumptions, and being ignored or closed out of opportunities with some landlords, some managers, and some community members because of my sexuality.

I believe all Ohioans should be free to work toward their brightest future regardless of their gender or sexual orientation. I believe all members of my queer community deserve to be safe, and supported, no matter where they go in my state. I love Ohio, and I am actively invested in building a future for my community here. But without nondiscrimination protections, we are less able to care about the future of our communities and our state, because we'll be struggling to provide for basic necessities.

The Movement Advancement Project notes that about 4% of each of your constituencies identifies as LGBTQ. That's about 50,000 people in Cuyahoga County, where I live, and more than 467,000 people across Ohio. Each of us deserves equal treatment under the law. Each of us deserves fair treatment and equal opportunity. The Ohio Fairness Act helps my community achieve that. It is also, plain and simple, the right thing to do. Please vote in support of the Ohio Fairness Act.

I urge you to pass House Bill 369.

Thank you for your time and consideration.