

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

My name is Elizabeth Troxell and I am an Ohio native. I grew up in Dayton and chose to return to Ohio following my graduation from the Northwestern University School of Law. While my husband and I toyed with the idea of settling in the Chicago area, we both felt that Ohio was an ideal place to raise a family. After living in Dayton for a number of years, we relocated to Hilliard, Ohio so my husband could attend the Ohio State University School of Law.

I spent a decade practicing employment law before becoming a corporate employee relations specialist. My entire career has been spent ensuring that all employees in a given workforce feel welcome and respected and are treated equitably regardless of personal characteristics. We have long known that this is essential for a workplace to function optimally and productively. That's why companies, including the ones I have represented, take great care through policy and practice to specifically prohibit discrimination against and harassment of people based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. It is beyond time for the state law of Ohio to catch up.

LGBTQ people are our friends, neighbors, co-workers and loved ones. They contribute to our society in immeasurable ways. They teach our children, lead our businesses, provide medical care to us, serve as our pastors and volunteer to help those less fortunate. Most importantly, they are citizens of this great state and deserve the same opportunities and protections as everyone else.

On a personal note, two of my children are part of the LGBTQ community. They are exceptional students with an extraordinary focus on serving their schools and their Central Ohio community. They've served as officers of Interact and Key clubs, served on student council, worked in the Hilliard food pantry, escorted special needs students to Special Prom and worked to build awareness around the issue of Human Trafficking, all while maintaining 4.0+ grade point averages. These exemplary young citizens of Ohio deserve protection from discrimination; they deserve equality. My work has given me great insight into the many ways discrimination impacts people in this community and it is appalling to me that state and federal law protections do not currently exist.

The time is now. I believe that passage of House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act, is imperative to ensuring that all Ohio citizens are protected from discrimination in the critical areas of employment, housing and public accommodations. Further, we need a mechanism, which the Act provides, to enforce these protections by empowering the Ohio Civil Rights Commission to act on charges of discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of House Bill 369.