

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and the members of the House Civil Justice Committee, my name is Hannah Rosenberg, and I work with Oberlin Community Services and the Lorain County LGBT Task Force. I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act.

It is vitally important to pass legislation protecting the LGBTQ community of Ohio from discrimination. I speak both on behalf of two organizations, and on behalf of myself. I am the Food Programs Coordinator for an emergency social service agency called Oberlin Community Services (OCS). OCS provides emergency assistance to the 300,000 residents of Lorain County, Ohio who are struggling to meet basic needs. As Food Programs Coordinator I administer seven emergency food services for food-insecure residents of the County including: a regular choice food pantry on site, youth-specific emergency food programs like Afterschool Snack and Backpack, and senior-specific food delivery programs. In this capacity as an emergency social service provider, I can tell you with certainty that LGBTQ residents of Lorain County are more vulnerable than non-LGBTQ residents to food-insecurity and financial instability. At OCS, we see many LGBTQ residents who have been evicted or fired due to their LGBTQ identities and who are therefore facing financial difficulty. These residents would not otherwise need to rely on our services.

Secondly, I am a board member of the Lorain County LGBTQ and Allies Task Force, the first and only queer advocacy organization in the County. As a Task Force board member, I design programmatic interventions for LGBTQ residents (and youth) and collect data on service gaps. In this capacity, I can once again attest to the vulnerability of LGBTQ Lorain County residents -- individuals who would not otherwise be financially unstable or vulnerable, but who are vulnerable specifically because of their LGBTQ identities and the discrimination they experience. Lastly, I myself am trans. As a member of the LGBTQ Ohio community, I can personally attest to the discrimination experienced by trans people. I am a college educated professional with full-time, gainful employment and stable housing, and I STILL experience regular discrimination. These three experiences make it clear to me that without express protection against discrimination at the state level, LGBTQ Ohioans will continue to experience barriers to accessing basic resources and will continue to be vulnerable. Protecting this population at the State level will allow for LGBTQ citizens be more productive members of society.

Please vote yes on House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Hannah Rosenberg