



*BEFORE THE HOUSE CIVIL JUSTICE COMMITTEE
PROPONENT TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 369*

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 369 (HB 369). My name is Kevin Shimp and I am the Director of Labor and Legal Affairs for the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

The Ohio Chamber is the state's leading business advocate, and we represent over 8,000 companies that do business in Ohio. Our mission is to aggressively champion free enterprise, economic competitiveness and growth for the benefit of all Ohioans.

In our efforts to champion economic competitiveness, the Ohio Chamber recognizes the value and power of diversity. We believe that employees deserve robust protections from discrimination and that discrimination of any type has no place in the workplace. Everyone deserves the right to do their job without fear of being discriminated against and every person, regardless of their race, color, religion, sex, military status, national origin, disability, age, ancestry, sexual orientation, or gender identity deserves equal opportunity and equal protection under the law. The protections for housing, employment, and public accommodations in HB 369 would ensure that all Ohioans can benefit from Ohio's growing workforce, enhance mutual respect between employers and employees, and further show that Ohio is a hospitable and welcoming place to live, work, and start a business.

HB 369 would also solve a regulatory compliance issue for employers by eliminating a patchwork of local labor ordinances in favor of a uniform statewide anti-discrimination standard. The Ohio Chamber's support for a statewide discrimination standard is consistent with our position on many other issues because a patchwork of local ordinances is a compliance nightmare for employers.

Twenty states and the District of Columbia currently have laws on the books outlawing discrimination in private employment based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity. In Ohio, twenty-six municipalities and one county currently have similar anti-discrimination laws on the books including Cuyahoga County, Akron, Athens, Bexley, Bowling Green, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Cleveland Heights, Columbus, Coshocton, Dayton, East Cleveland, Lakewood, Kent, Medina, Newark, Olmsted Falls, Shaker Heights, Toledo, Yellow Springs, and Youngstown.

The Ohio Chamber also supports HB 369's companion legislation – Senate Bill 11 – and has supported prior versions of the Fairness Act when we testified as a proponent of HB 160 from the 132nd General

Assembly because we believe that employment decisions should be made based on an individual's qualifications, not on the basis of non-job-related characteristics.

In conclusion, we urge your support for HB 369 because prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity will help businesses attract the best and brightest talent from all walks of life and ensure that Ohio is viewed as a welcoming and hospitable place to do business. It will also provide a statewide standard where there has not previously been one which will make compliance with Ohio's labor laws easier for employers in the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and I can answer any questions you may have at this time.