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TO: House Civil Justice Committee
FROM: Gary Daniels, Chief Lobbyist, ACLU of Ohio
DATE: January 28, 2020
RE: House Bill 369 – Proponent Testimony (written only)

To Chairman Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for this opportunity to express our support for House Bill 369.

HB 369, the Ohio Fairness Act, will protect your constituents from being fired from or denied a job, turned away from housing, or refused public services because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

No Ohioan should be relegated to the status of a second-class citizen in our state because of who they are or who they love. Yet, this is the reality for many here because they do not enjoy the benefits of a statewide law to protect them.

Of course, this is not the first time legislation such as HB 369 has been introduced in the Ohio legislature. The differences between now and when bills of these type were introduced years ago include the growing number of states passing these laws, the increasing number of Ohio communities doing the same, and hundreds and hundreds of businesses across our state who have joined Ohio Competes to support the Ohio Fairness Act.

Concerns that such laws will result in a flood of meritless lawsuits have proven unfounded in states with these legal protections. Young Ohioans continue to flee Ohio for states more aligned with their inclusive ideologies leaving our state to grow older, less diverse, and struggling to compete in a 21st century economy and world. Equality under the law does not mean “special rights,” it means being treated the same as everyone else.

Simply put, there is zero logical or acceptable reason for you to continue to leave your constituents subject to discrimination, fear, and hatred. The time has come to pass the Ohio Fairness Act. The ACLU of Ohio urges your support for House Bill 369.