



January 27, 2020

Dear Chairman Hambley, Vice Chairman Patton, Ranking Member Brown and Members of the House Civil Justice Committee:

My name is Dr. Michael V. Drake, and I am the president of The Ohio State University. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of “The Ohio Fairness Act” (HB 369), which expands protections and prohibits discrimination in Ohio law on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.

For 150 years, Ohio State has been steadfast in its commitment to discover and share knowledge that improves lives and elevates society. We educate our talented and diverse student body through a comprehensive array of distinguished academic programs – and prepare future leaders to be active and engaged citizens in their communities. We need the contributions of all Buckeyes to advance our founding land-grant mission and accelerate our momentum as a leading national flagship public research university.

We also play a key role in Ohio’s innovation economy, generating \$15.2 billion annually and supporting more than 123,000 jobs. In fact, one in every 57 jobs in the state is directly or indirectly supported or sustained by our university. Of the most in-demand jobs requiring a bachelor’s degree, our graduates have accepted employment in more than 90% of these occupations, on average, over the past several years. Inclusive excellence has been, and will remain, central to our impact in these areas and so many others.

I support The Ohio Fairness Act because it is the right thing to do. Moreover, it is critical to attracting and retaining the very best talent that will help move Ohio forward. As the state’s fourth-largest employer, Ohio State is already a proud member of Ohio Business Competes, a non-partisan business coalition that advocates for the expansion of statewide non-discrimination laws. But we need your support to make these protections a reality for 400,000 LGBTQ+ Ohioans.

Buckeyes derive great strength from bringing together people from different backgrounds and learning from their experiences. Diversity of thought and expression enable all of us to do the most good for the most people and cultivate an environment that is open to new ideas and perspectives. It is in this same spirit that I support this legislation and encourage you to do the same.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important issue. Please contact me if I can be of assistance as you proceed with your deliberations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael V. Drake". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "M" and "D".

Michael V. Drake, MD
President