



**Sarah Inskeep**  
**Proponent Testimony for Ohio House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act**  
**Ohio House Civil Justice Committee**  
**Tuesday, February 4, 2020**

Chairman Hambly, Vice-Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify in support of House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act.

My name is Sarah Inskeep and I am the Ohio State Policy and Movement Building Director for Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity, also known as URGE. URGE is a reproductive justice organization powered by young people – particularly young people of color and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA+) young people – in Southern and Midwestern states. That includes our great state of Ohio.

At URGE, we envision a world where all people, including LGBTQIA+ folks, can live, love, create families, express our gender, and enjoy sexuality with liberation, power, and joy and without discrimination, stigma, or interference. It is with these deeply held values and on behalf of our hundreds of members in Ohio that I urge you to vote yes and ultimately pass House Bill 369.

For over a decade, URGE has been organizing and mobilizing young people in cities and college campuses across Ohio. Whether it is our City Activist Networks (CAN), our paid-canvassing programming, or student chapter engagement work – our staff has and will continue to proudly provide our majority LGBTQIA+ membership with the tools, resources, and support they need to create campaigns and take action in their communities for reproductive justice and LGBTQIA+ liberation. For many young people, URGE in Ohio has provided them a safe and dignified environment where they can be their full selves, have a sense of belonging, and be celebrated for being who they are, not in spite of it.

The experiences and stories of URGE's members reflect what we know to be true in Ohio: LGBTQIA+ people, especially young queer and trans people of color, face the most significant barriers to housing, employment, education, and other critical public accommodations.[i] According to the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, out of the 20,000+ respondents who participated, nearly one and three experienced discrimination, harassment, and physical violence when visiting a place of public accommodation.[ii] For too long these barriers and discrimination have resulted in victimization, violence, and trauma. Ohio's current lack of protections demonstrates that there is in fact second class people in this state – with these communities bearing the brunt of the discrimination. The State of Ohio should be working to



ensure that all people – including the most marginalized in our state – are given equal protection under the law.

LGBTQIA+ people in Ohio need and deserve to have access to safe and gender-affirming public restrooms. LGBTQIA+ people in Ohio need and deserve to be able to disclose their gender identity and sexual orientation without fear of being denied health care or housing. LGBTQIA+ folks need and deserve to feel safe at work and be provided the same opportunities for promotions as their cisgender and heterosexual colleagues. LGBTQIA+ young people need and deserve access to high-quality education and to know that they are protected from harm and harassment both on campus and in the classroom.

It's time that Ohio does the right and moral thing and enacts public accommodation protections for LGBTQIA+ people in the state. I humbly ask you to vote yes and pass House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act. Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions you have.

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[i] National Public Radio, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, *Discrimination in America: Experiences and Views of LGBTQ Americans* (2017): p. 11

[ii] James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). Executive Summary of the Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey. Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality.