



OHIO HOTEL & LODGING ASSOCIATION  
175 S. THIRD ST. SUITE 170  
COLUMBUS OH 43215  
P: (614) 461-6462

---

## **Testimony to the Ohio House Civil Justice Committee for HB 369 • January 2020**

**Joe Savarise, Executive Director • Ohio Hotel & Lodging Association**

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and the members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act. This legislation is important to our industry and to Ohio's strong travel economy on two different levels.

First, our industry agrees that all Ohioans deserve fair treatment and equal opportunity under the law. Hotels and the hospitality industry have a proven track record of their commitment to providing jobs and career opportunities for LGBTQ associates. The value of these hard-working, dedicated and talented professionals to our member businesses is immense. In order for our travel economy to continue to grow, and for our businesses to thrive, Ohio must protect these individuals from discriminatory practices in employment, housing or commerce that will drive away thousands of potential employees who want to work in, live in, pay taxes and otherwise contribute to this great state.

Our industry's commitment to these associates is why our organization joined Ohio Business Competes, the statewide coalition of more than 800 job creators and contributors to the economy who recognize the importance of nondiscrimination protections for this valuable constituency. We protect and support the LGBTQ community within our own businesses. But it is critical for these employees to have the safeguards included in the Ohio Fairness Act to extend comprehensive nondiscrimination protections in employment, housing and public accommodations. Failure to do so will make us less competitive to other markets that are enticing these individuals to take their talents away from Ohio to other destinations around the country – and around the world.

There is another important reason for us to advance the protections contained in the Ohio Fairness Act.

Our industry knows from experience that more clients, groups, sanctioning bodies, leagues, major events and other businesses are placing paramount importance on nondiscrimination policies when deciding where to bring their business and spend their dollars. It just makes good business sense to approve this measure. Ohio has a strong and growing travel economy – more than 428,000 supported jobs, more than \$44 billion in annual visitor spending – in part because of the recognition that Ohio is welcoming to all communities and is open for business.

Competition in regard to this variable gets tougher each year. The last thing we want to do is to head in the wrong direction, and be seen to be against proactive, nondiscriminatory standards. The price for states that have made that mistake is devastating and is measured in years and billions of dollars.

Fortunately, we can avoid those economic mistakes here and do the right thing in offering common sense protections based on ideals we all share: equality, freedom and human dignity. We add our voice in respectfully asking for your thoughtful consideration and support of House Bill 369.

Thank you.

**Joe Savarise, Executive Director**  
Ohio Hotel & Lodging Association  
175 S. Third Street, Suite 170  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
(614) 461-6462