

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and the members of the House Civil Justice Committee, my name is Katie Lemmer and I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill HB369, the Ohio Fairness Act.

I am a person who is very visibly gay. Looking at me, employers can very easily assume my sexuality. This makes finding a job and keeping a job very nerve wracking. Because there are no legal protections against LGBT related discrimination, I am very aware that there is nothing stopping my work from firing me simply because I am gay. I am lucky, my coworkers are all wonderful and accepting, but not every gay or trans person is so lucky.

The stress of knowing that you could be fired for who you are takes a toll not just on your mental health, but also on job performance. People will work harder for a company that they know values them and protects who they are. Having these legal protections in all of Ohio will allow more workers to feel secure and allow them to focus more on their work and not whether or not they will be fired.

I have been working in Ohio for over two years and plan to work here for much longer than that. However, if there are no legal protections for me as a worker, as I begin to establish myself in a career, I may need to find a place where I know I will not be fired for my personal life and who I might be dating. I know I am not alone in this thought, and that many LGBT people would prefer to live and work in a place where they are not putting their livelihoods at risk.

The Center for American Progress estimates that job discrimination has led to a loss of 64 billion dollars nationally. If Ohio does not protect LGBT workers, Ohio will be losing money and economic value. As a person living in Ohio, I want this state to be economically viable. Protecting LGBT workers protects the state.

I strongly urge you to pass House Bill HB369, the Ohio Fairness Act, for the sake of Ohio's citizens and its economy.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Katie Lemmer