

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Minority Member Brown, and the members of the House Civil Justice Committee, my name is LaDonna Calingo. I am a proud parent of one of the most amazingly smart, creative, loving, caring and talented fourteen-year-old children that I know, who just happens to be transgender.

Growing up in America, we were told that if we worked hard, followed the rules, and stayed out of trouble that we could be anyone and accomplish anything that we wanted. We were taught that every person has the same opportunities and that the only thing that could hold us back from achieving our grandest dreams was ourselves.

As I grew up I became quite aware how individuals were judged based on things other than their accomplishments, and good citizenship. That everyone did not have equal opportunities in our beautiful country. However, I thought that we fought for the civil rights movement and that at least now there were laws on the books that protected the people who are in minorities from discrimination.

And now, here I am as a proud parent of a transgender child, and I have to explain to him that the American dream is not true for him. If people choose to disagree with who he is and if they don't like him being himself that they are allowed to discriminate against him and treat him as less than.

LGBTQ people have been our friends and neighbors since the beginning of time. Unfortunately, due to society's uneducated views, they were forced to hide their true selves for fear of harm and even death.

Here in America, our laws are supposed to be made based on logic, reason and facts. We make our decisions based on Science, not religion. Science is universal! Religion is vast and diverse! When it comes to governing, we must rule by Science and not religious beliefs.

We now have confirmation that people who are LGBTQ are indeed born that way, and it isn't some "deviant" choice that they are making. I have a hard time comprehending how so many dysfunctional heterosexual relationships are somehow superior to healthy, loving LGBTQ relationships. I don't understand how we can focus so much on who someone is having a relationship with and not how healthy and loving that relationship is. I fail to see how who I choose to love and make my family, can adversely affect others. People who are worried about the deterioration of society should focus on human trafficking, domestic violence, homelessness, our mental health crisis, child molestation, child abuse, a broken prison system, a broken education system where the wealthiest get the highest funding for education and the poorest get the least, theft, fraud, greed, drug and alcohol abuse, hate, and selfishness. These are the things that deteriorate our families and our society, not LGBTQ people and their relationships.

The law we are asking for already exists in more than 20 states. I challenge anyone to show any negatives effects that have occurred from these laws being enacted?

I moved to Ohio in 1998 and I was immediately impressed by how progressive and inclusive Columbus seemed to be. I was so glad that my husband and I found such an amazing place to have and raise our children. I can't imagine living anywhere else. I am asking you to do the right thing and have love and compassion in your heart, and to know with conviction that it is not ok to discriminate against any group or person.

Please vote for HB369, so I don't have to explain to my son why the American dream is for others, but not for him.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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