

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Minority Member Brown, and the members of the House Civil Justice Committee,

My name is Lisa Phair and I am a small business owner in the West Chester area, a board member for H.O.M.E. "Housing Opportunities Made Equal," a supporter of the Cincinnati Children's Hospital transgender clinic, and the mother of three children, ages 19, 11 and 10.

I have lived in Ohio most of my life, growing up Catholic in a small rural town in Butler County, attending college at the University of Cincinnati and starting a business in 2003 in West Chester. My life was "typical" until 4 years ago when my husband and I learned that one of our children is transgender.

Having a sweet, shy little girl, who identified as a boy (in kindergarten) turned our world upside down. At the time, we were ill prepared to help our child and we were completely ignorant about gender identity disorders. But with the help of social workers, therapists and pediatricians, we learned over time how to support him and we started by educating ourselves about gender identity.

Although we have the love and unwavering support of our family, neighbors and friends, our journey has subjected our family to many trials and tribulations. These experiences have opened our eyes to the struggles that so many LGBTQ people face, due to the lack of equal protections under the law.

I support HB 369 because I cannot imagine having to tell my 11 year-old that he has less civil liberties than others because he was born with a body that doesn't coincide with his brain.

I support HB 369 because I can't imagine the humiliation or embarrassment he would face if he were to be harassed or thrown out of a public place in front of his peers. Or worse, if he were to be prevented from using a public restroom for simply not meeting the expectation of how society feels he should look.

I support HB 369 because I can't imagine my child graduating from college, getting his dream job and then being "outed" as transgender because the gender marker on his Ohio birth certificate doesn't match his (current) passport or (future) driver's license.

HB 369 would prevent my son from being legally fired from his job or denied housing based on his identity. As a mother, I have hope that my son may someday be able to live as freely, as his sisters do, so that is why I support The Ohio Fairness Act.

But my support for HB 369 extends beyond that of my child's needs, because I have personally seen how anti-discrimination policies and protections can impact economic growth in our state.

Since passing LGBTQ anti-discrimination protections and banning conversion therapy in Cincinnati, I have helped a number of families and Fortune 500 executives move into my

area. These relocation transferees have verbalized how their decision to move to Cincinnati was based on the reputation of inclusiveness and the culture of respect, coupled with the anti-discrimination policy of the company that offered them that position. LGBTQ executives and business owners don't want to live in hiding, invest in a community who doesn't invest in them or build their life in a place where they could lose their job, be denied housing or be harassed in public.

One client that I had, from Houston, TX, worked for Delta Airlines. He mentioned that when he was offered a position that would require a move to Cincinnati, he "jumped" on the opportunity. He said that he was aware of the city's LGBTQ protections and Delta's internal policies and that was a "win-win" for him.

I support HB 369 because I fundamentally believe:

- Protections for LGBTQ Ohioans are needed NOW, more than ever before. According to Jeniece Jones, MPA JD, the executive director of H.O.M.E (Housing Opportunities Made Equal), LGBTQ-related housing discrimination cases are on the rise. 40 cases were tracked in 2018 alone, and in one of those cases there were explicit anti-LGBTQ statements made by a landlord to a Lesbian couple in broad daylight. Another case involved a landlord sexually harassing a tenant because he was perceived to be Gay.
- All Ohio residents and visitors deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and anti-discrimination protections set expectations for other's behavior
- Ohio business owners should not have to compete with businesses in other states when recruiting and retaining top talent (who may happen to be LGBTQ), just because another state may have LGBTQ protections and Ohio doesn't
- All children should grow up with the understanding that if they work hard they can succeed in Ohio, no matter who they love or how they identify
- No person should be turned away from a public place for their gender expression
- And, no parent should have to worry about their child's basic human rights

If my son were sitting here today, you wouldn't notice that he is different from any other 11 year-old boy. He looks, walks and talks like any other kid his age. He enjoys basketball, fishing, baseball and riding his bike. He is well respected by his teachers, coaches, camp counselors and his peers, at school.

My son should be afforded the same opportunity as every other child at his bus stop. He is smart, kind and capable. He should ONLY be judged by his character and integrity, not what's in his pants.

My prayer is that by the time he is old enough to understand, our state will have passed the Ohio Fairness Act. And my time could be spent growing my business and enjoying life with my family, rather than advocating for my son to be afforded the same equal rights and opportunities as his sisters and his friends.

Thank you for your consideration. I am willing to answer any questions you may have about my family or my experience with the hundreds of gender non-conforming children that I know.

Sincerely,

Lisa M Phair

