



SOUTHEASTERN OHIO RAINBOW ALLIANCE

Southeastern Ohio Rainbow Alliance (SEORA) Testimony in Support of Ohio Fairness Act (HB 369)

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and the members of the House Civil Justice Committee, my name is Lyndsey Fought. I am a member of the Southeastern Ohio Rainbow Alliance's Board of Directors and I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act.

It is with great pride that the Southeastern Ohio Rainbow Alliance submit testimony in support of the Ohio Fairness Act. As an organization, we join our voice with many across Ohio and throughout the US calling for much needed protections for LGBTQ individuals regarding employment, housing, and public accommodation.

As one of the few organizations in Southeast Ohio addressing the needs of the LGBTQ community, we interact with individuals and groups who simply want to live their lives without fear; individuals who want to ensure that the wellbeing of their families is protected equally under the law. We have met individuals experiencing high levels of stress due to fear of being fired from their jobs for having a picture of their same-sex partner on their desk; individuals isolated due to experiences of rejection in restaurants for being perceived to be different; individuals dealing with financial hardships due to discrimination without any recourse for protecting their rights. Research shows that rates of discrimination and violence are higher towards the LGBTQ community, especially trans identified people of color. Research also shows that rates of bullying and harassment are higher in rural areas compared to more urban areas.

As LGBTQ residents of Ohio, all we ask is for the same protections guaranteed to others: the right to go to work, have a place to call home, and go about our neighborhoods without fear of being discriminated against. We know that laws are just part of the change needed in our communities. The Ohio Fairness Act would provide needed protections as well as a resource for recourse when these protections are violated.

No one in Ohio should live in constant fear of being treated as a second-class citizen. House Bill 369 would guarantee that all Ohioans are treated equally and justly under the law. We beseech and we demand that our legislators fully support the Ohio Fairness Act so that all of us in Southeast Ohio and throughout our great state can fully embody and proclaim the words of our state song..."freedom is supreme in this majestic land...where my dreams all come true."

Please vote yes on House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lyndsey Fought
Executive Director, Southeastern Ohio Rainbow Alliance