

HB369 Testimony

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Minority Member Brown, and the members of the House Civil Justice Committee, my name is Mason Hickman and I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act.

I am standing in-front of you today because I am a brother, a son, a fourth-year student at Ohio State, a published writer, a former intern at Planned Parenthood, a mentor, an activist, and I am also transgender. This is what trans looks like.

Despite how much work I accomplish in this lifetime, how many degrees I earn, or how much money I make – the laws as they currently stand statewide say that I can be fired from my job, forced to endure harassment, denied housing, or denied employment because I am transgender.

I was fourteen years old when I realized that maybe I was different – that the gender I was assigned at birth did not align with who I knew myself to be. It was in this moment that I cried, I cried because of the hate I knew I would experience in this lifetime, I cried because I knew that under the law – I was not equal.

No one deserves to feel the way that I did that day. No one deserves to feel the way that many LGBTQ+ individuals do in Ohio. Twenty-six localities in Ohio have anti-discrimination laws, but there is nothing statewide. LGBTQ+ Ohioans deserve better than unequally distributed rights - we deserve better than having to tiptoe around counties to ensure we aren't denied housing, we deserve better than to be fired because of who we love, we deserve better than having to stand up in-front of you today trying to tell you why we deserve to be equal.

Ohio's laws for equality are lacking compared to other states. If you want people to come here to live, to work, to start businesses, and to grow – you need to ensure that ALL people are protected under the law, not just some. All residents of Ohio deserve to be treated equally – and this is your opportunity to stand on the right side of history. I urge you to pass House Bill 11, the Ohio Fairness Act. I thank you for your time, and I am not going to answer any questions.