

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and the members of the House Civil Justice Committee, my name is Nikki Odongray. I am the owner of Pierogi Pantry in Lorain, Ohio, and I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act.

I support the Ohio Fairness Act because all Ohioans deserve fair treatment and equal opportunity under the law. No one should be fired from their job, denied housing, or refused a sale simply because of who they are or who they love. LGBTQ people should be able to work hard, provide for their families, contribute to their communities, and engage fully in society without fear of discrimination. The Ohio Fairness Act is common-sense policy based on the principles of equality, freedom, and dignity.

The Ohio Fairness Act is not only the right thing to do — it's also good for business. In order for Ohio to attract and retain the best business talent, we need to adopt policies that are inclusive of everyone — including LGBTQ people. Furthermore, in a state where young people are increasingly leaving to take their skills, talents, and education elsewhere, we need to double down on our efforts to implement attractive policies like LGBTQ-inclusive nondiscrimination protections to encourage them to stay.

Many businesses already know the crucial importance of basic nondiscrimination protections. In fact, this is demonstrated by the over 850 businesses that have joined Ohio Business Competes, the statewide coalition of businesses in support of LGBTQ nondiscrimination protections. However, an employer cannot protect their employees in all areas of law. It's up to Ohio's lawmakers to extend comprehensive nondiscrimination protections to the LGBTQ community in all areas of life - employment, housing and public accommodations.

My company is a proud member of Ohio Business Competes and we are deeply dedicated to equality for all. We believe it is time that ALL people were protected equally under the law.

Please vote yes on House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act, to outlaw discrimination.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Nikki Odongray

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