

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

I write in support of the Ohio Fairness Act not because I am a member of the LGBTQ community, nor because a close family member is. I support this legislation because I don't believe any Ohioan should be denied housing, employment, or public services because they identify as LGBTQ. These fellow Ohioans aren't asking for special rights or special treatment. They simply want access to the same rights and resources as all other Ohioans. It doesn't matter if you like LGBTQ people. What matters is that identifying as LGBTQ is not against the law.

That Ohio as a state continues to condone legal discrimination against LGBTQ individuals is unconscionable in 2020. It's time that Ohio join many other states in outlawing such discrimination. In doing so, you would not only recognize the humanity of LGBTQ individuals and support their right to live and work without fear of discrimination, but you would also position Ohio to be much more welcome to the skills and talents LGBTQ individuals in the workforce. This will only help to advance Ohio's cultural and economic interests moving forward. As a straight, cisgender wife and mother, I am not the least bit threatened by LGBTQ equality in the state I call home. On the contrary, LGBTQ equality would make me proud of Ohio. Not so long ago, others fought for my rights as a woman. I feel it's my ethical duty as a citizen of Ohio to pay it forward and fight for the rights of my fellow Ohioans who identify as LGBTQ. The Ohio Fairness Act is the right path forward, at the right time, to finally protect my fellow citizens from discrimination. Please do what is right.

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

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Rebecca Perkins