

**Aryn Reed**  
**Proponent Testimony for Ohio House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act**  
**Ohio House Civil Justice Committee**  
**Tuesday, February 4, 2020**

Chairman Hambly, Vice-Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify in support of House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act.

I am here today not only as an advocate and storyteller, but as a proud queer person and citizen of Ohio. I've lived in Ohio for my entire life and during that time I've encountered hatred and discrimination from every angle. From not being allowed to bring a same-sex date to prom to being assaulted in a bar for kissing another queer person, discrimination exists in every facet of life.

Despite my academic or professional accomplishments, I can still be fired simply for being gay. When my partner and I walk down High Street, we don't hold hands for fear that we will be attacked again. Two years ago, we were assaulted in a bar for kissing and holding hands. Bruised and beaten just for being gay and expressing our love. The police did nothing and our assailant still walks the streets to this day. That's the everyday reality that we as LGBTQIA+ people face. That's not to forget that we can legally be fired, denied healthcare, evicted from our home and denied the right to adopt a child. Yes, we can get married now, but it's not enough.

Twenty-two localities in Ohio have anti-discrimination laws, but there is nothing statewide. I had the honor of speaking at the Westerville nondiscrimination ordinance to guarantee that I can walk into a store without being asked to leave solely based on my gender expression. Why can I not do that anywhere in the state yet?

LGBTQIA+ Ohioans deserve better than unequally distributed rights –we deserve better than having to navigate from county to county when looking for a safe place to live. We deserve better than to be fired because of who we love, not the quality of our character or our work ethic. We deserve better than having to stand up in front of you today asserting why we deserve the same rights as any heterosexual couple. Our money is green and spends the same, so why prevent us from using it?

Ohio's laws for equality are severely lacking when it comes to protections for LGBTQIA+ people in the workplace. If you want people to come here to live, to work, to start businesses, and to start families– you need to ensure that ALL people are protected under the law, not just heterosexuals. All residents of Ohio deserve to be treated equally – to be protected from harm and given fundamental rights, not treated as second class citizens. I urge you to vote yes and ultimately pass House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act, as nothing negative can come from the

passage of this Bill. I urge you to be on the right side of history, one that protects its citizens and respects their identities. I thank you for your time.