

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

I support House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act, because it promotes equality for LGBTQ Ohioans for those things that are necessary to life and dignity: access to employment, housing, and public accommodations. As the Dean of Trinity Cathedral in Cleveland, I am fortunate to serve a city that will benefit greatly from equal access to housing and employment, and as a pastor to many LGBTQ folks I am honored to speak up for legislation that affirms equal access to jobs and housing.

As a faith leader I believe in securing and celebrating the dignity of every human being; dignity means having a safe and secure place to live and access to meaningful employment. As a civic leader, I also believe that nondiscrimination is vital to a growing economy, where all can contribute and participate. Sadly, I also know well the need for nondiscrimination legislation, for in its absence far too many people are barred from housing and employment based upon sexual orientation, gender identity, race, age, or physical ability.

Ohio should lead the way as a state where all its citizens can live, work and thrive. Nondiscrimination legislation is a vital tool to make sure that that all Ohioans can contribute to strengthening our state and our communities.

I urge you to pass House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act.

Thank you for your time and consideration.