

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

I am the Senior Pastor of Lakewood Congregational Church in Lakewood, Ohio, which is an Open and Affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ. We welcome people of all sexual orientations, ages, differing abilities, and ethnic, economic, and racial backgrounds into the full life and ministry of our church. We declare this in the name of the Still Speaking God, whose Son, Jesus Christ, welcomed all people into God's circle of grace.

I urge you to vote in favor of House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act, which would prohibit discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodations based on characteristics of race, color, religion, military status, national origin, disability, age, ancestry, familial status, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression.

We believe that all Ohio residents should have the right to live and prosper in this community without fear of prejudice or discrimination. The fact remains that in Ohio, a person can be terminated from employment, denied housing, or excluded accessing basic goods and services solely because of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

My faith calls me to adhere to the moral obligation to treat others with the respect I desire for myself. Offering protections to all people allows me and others in my community to act out the essential tenets of our faith.

I am proud to support comprehensive LGBTQ-inclusive nondiscrimination protections for the State of Ohio. Please pass House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act, to protect those most vulnerable in our community and declare Ohio the welcoming state I am proud to be a part of!

With the Grace and Peace of Jesus Christ,
Rev. Joanna D'Agostino
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