

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

Equality is so important. It is what makes everyone feel important. Without equality, many of my values wouldn't exist. If someone feels inferior in their life, it really takes a toll on their mental health. Many of my close friends along with myself are members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

I have always been passionate about equality and knowing that it is still legal in Ohio to discriminate against my community is extremely upsetting. In middle school, one of my best friends was bullied for being gay. He was bullied so badly, he had to transfer schools. This was before he ever came out as gay to anyone. He would cry every day, and it would break my heart. I could only do so much for him, because the principal didn't care about the bullying problem.

I have experienced a lot of discrimination towards my friends, but not much towards myself. I am not very out to anyone but my mom and my friends, because I am scared of what will happen to me. If my grandparents knew, I feel as though they would disown me from the family completely, which terrifies me. Passing the Ohio Fairness Act gives everyone the freedom to express who they are, without worry that they will be fired from their jobs or kicked out of organizations. Without this, people will continue to be forced into poverty due to unfair practices.

Do your state a favor and pass this bill. You won't just be helping the LGBTQIA+ community, but you will be helping the economy, the people of Ohio, and the country as a whole. Thank you for your time.

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

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Reyana Bates