



Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and the members of the House Civil Justice Committee, my name is Robert C. Helmer, I am the President of Baldwin Wallace University (BW), and I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act.

I support the Ohio Fairness Act because all Ohioans deserve fair treatment and equal opportunity under the law. No one should be fired from their job, denied housing, or refused a sale simply because of who they are or who they love. LGBTQ people should be able to work hard, provide for their families, contribute to their communities, and engage fully in society without fear of discrimination. The Ohio Fairness Act is common-sense policy based on the principles of equality, freedom, and dignity.

The Ohio Fairness Act is not only the right thing to do — it's also good for the interests of Baldwin Wallace University, other universities like ours and for the businesses and organizations in our region that ultimately hire our graduates. Our institution was founded in 1845 on the principle of inclusion as one of the first in the nation to admit students regardless of race or gender. Presently, our ability to attract, retain and equip the most talented students to lead the future of businesses and organizations in our region and state, requires the adoption of policies that are inclusive of everyone — including LGBTQ people. Furthermore, in a state where young people are increasingly leaving to take their skills, talents, and education elsewhere, we need to double down on our efforts to implement attractive policies like LGBTQ-inclusive nondiscrimination protections to encourage them to stay.

At BW, we recognize the crucial importance of basic nondiscrimination protections. Over the years, we have worked to adopt policies and articulate institutional positions which clearly communicate our value in a community which honors the human dignity and civil rights of all. We've seen the gain that supporting nondiscrimination policies can do for a campus like BW. Let's hold onto those same graduates and ensure them a future in Ohio. To this end we have joined the over 800 businesses that have joined Ohio Business Competes, the statewide coalition of businesses in support of LGBTQ nondiscrimination protections. We ask that lawmakers solidify the effort to protect the rights of all Ohioans through support of this bill.

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

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert C. Helmer".