

Chair Blessing III, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Minority Member Clyde, and the members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee:

My name is Rev. Richard P. Young and I am writing in support of House Bill 160.

In nearly 40 years of ordained ministry and after 21 years working in public mental health, I can assure you that discrimination against LGBTQ+ persons is still going on in the workplace, in schools, and in public accommodations. Such discrimination is immoral and should be outlawed.

I have worked with numerous persons in the LGBTQ+ community over the years, and many of them still fear loss of a job or other forms of discrimination if their minority status were to be revealed. I remember a woman who was asked to give a talk to the local chapter of DignityUSA, an organization of LGBTQ+ Catholics and their friends and allies. After giving her presentation, she learned that her name appeared on a flyer that encouraged people to attend the presentation. She became extremely anxious that her employer would learn about her talk, and she would lose her job. In fact, all supportive persons are welcome at Dignity functions, regardless of sexual orientation. So, just giving a talk to a group that is primarily composed of LGBTQ+ persons does not automatically mean that the presenter is part of that community. Still, her fear was real. Fortunately, her employer did not learn about the event.

I also recall former clients in a mental health agency for which I worked who lived in great fear that their clinical records would be seen by an employer or landlord. Of course, these records are thoroughly protected, and cannot be released to a third party without the client's permission. Still, these clients lived in constant fear that the "wrong" person would find out about their sexual orientation.

Nobody should live in fear of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. A person who is a law-abiding Ohioan, who pays his/her taxes, and is a responsible member of society deserves to be protected from unjust discrimination.

I urge you to consider passing HB160.