

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

My name is Liz Gauntner, and I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 160.

Discrimination is real; I have experienced it. I was once told by a woman that she was no longer considering renting to me because of my same-sex relationship. I have also been followed into the woman's restroom by security twice and have been told more times than I can count that I'm in the wrong restroom, because I have a masculine way of dressing and have short hair. Although many of these instances happened outside of Ohio, I have apprehension any time I use a public restroom.

Often I try not to use the restroom in public places, but sometimes it can't be avoided, especially when on a road trip or at the airport. I psych myself up before I step into a public restroom and try to prepare myself to be questioned or criticized. I rush through, keeping my head down and trying to avoid eye contact, because I'm afraid. I would feel better if I was protected from discrimination by law.

I have no interest in harming anyone. I'm a normal person in your community, a person of faith and a church member. I have a career, a wife and a five-month old daughter. My wife is from Ohio, and we moved back here to raise a family. I have my own consulting business in the field of urban planning and economic development. It's important to me that I raise my family and do my work in a place where people feel safe and are protected by law.

I urge you to pass House Bill 160.