

December 21, 2017

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

I am writing in support of HB 160. I am urging strongly that you consider the proposed amendment and vote in favor. Ohio needs the changes proposed to Ohio's anti-discrimination laws to include sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as protected classes, expanding legal protections in housing, employment, and access to public services.

In our housing and homeless outreach programs, we serve over 1,000 people per year that have disabilities and are in need of housing services, including assistance with locating and attaining housing, housing subsidies, and supports to help them maintain housing. It is known to us that they still do not enjoy the same legal protections against discrimination afforded to other Ohioans. Gay and transgender people are our clients, tenants, friends, neighbors, family and coworkers. When it comes to being able to earn a living, having a place to live, or being served by a business or government office, they should be treated like anyone else and not be discriminated against. We seek to make sure that gay and transgender Ohioans have the same access to tenancy that others enjoy.

Those we serve have already faced serious housing crises and need the reassurance of housing stability that this law would provide. This House Bill strengthens Ohio's existing anti-discrimination laws by adding sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression to protect LGBT people and those who may be perceived as LGBT. Please support and vote for this measure protecting LGBT people statewide, bringing them a step closer to full access to their legal rights.

Andrea McGriff

Program Services Director

Miami Valley Housing Opportunities

907 West Fifth Street

Suite 300

Dayton Ohio 45402