



House Bill 369 – Proponent Testimony
Ohio House Civil Justice Committee
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Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the Ohio House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for allowing Cleveland Clinic to provide proponent testimony for House Bill 369, also known as the Ohio Fairness Act, which would extend nondiscrimination protections to LGBT Ohioans in employment, housing, and public accommodations. My name is Dr. James Hekman, and I am Medical Director of the Cleveland Clinic Lakewood Family Health Center.

In addition to this role, I also led the efforts to design and launch Cleveland Clinic's Center for LGBT Care, located in the Lakewood Family Health Center. Embedded in a primary care practice, the center provides care for all patients in a safe and welcoming environment. It includes providers who understand the health needs of LGBT patients, and access to specialists with expertise in LGBT care. Cleveland Clinic is recognized as a 'Top Performer' in caring for LGBT patients by the Health Care Equality Index.

Not only do we support our LGBT patients, but we also support our LGBT caregivers. As the largest private employer in the state of Ohio, Cleveland Clinic employs nearly 70,000 caregivers, and we remain committed to providing the LGBT community with the same protections this legislation would create.

Cleveland Clinic is an equal opportunity employer. It is the policy of Cleveland Clinic to prohibit discrimination and harassment of all kinds, afford equal employment opportunities to employees and applicants, and to administer all terms and conditions of employment without regard to sexual orientation or gender identity.

Cleveland Clinic is supportive of its LGBTQA caregivers in many ways, including through ClinicPride, which is Cleveland Clinic's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Ally (LGBTQA) Employee Resource Group. ClinicPride strives to advance Cleveland Clinic values by providing an inclusive network to support the professional development of LGBTQA caregivers, increasing awareness of LGBTQ patient health and wellness needs, advocating for fully inclusive policies and procedures to enhance the patient and caregiver experience, supporting recruitment, retention, and engagement of LGBTQA caregivers, and developing and maintaining partnerships with local community organizations.

Companies with strong LGBT policies tend to innovate the most, to have loyal employees, and to experience significantly less cases of discrimination lawsuits, according to the World Economic Forum. A report by Out Now estimates the US economy could add an extra \$9 billion a year if companies improved their ability to retain LGBT talent through the implementation of inclusive policies. Doing so also helps level the playing field and attract and retain more talent to the company and region.



With the current momentum occurring with regards to this topic, now is the time to ensure that the basic civil rights of Ohioans are protected through the passage of House Bill 369. It makes economic sense, and is, above all, the right thing to do.

We thank the bill sponsors, Representative Brett Hillyer and Representative Mike Skindell for introducing this bill. Again, Cleveland Clinic supports House Bill 369 and urges the committee to be supportive as well. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.