

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Minority Member Brown, and the members of the House Civil Justice Committee, my name is Christopher Redfern and I submit this testimony in support of House Bill 369.

I own and operate three small businesses in Ottawa County. I also served as a member of the Ohio General Assembly for more than a decade.

I write to you today to add my support for the passage of House Bill 369 and to urge you to allow a vote for the bill and to send it out of your committee to the entire Senate. As you know, HB 369 will expand certain prescribed protections for Ohio's gay, bisexual and transgender citizens seeking to find and retain employment. As a small business owner, I know the recruitment and retention of employees is a concern that my colleagues and I have. In areas of Ohio that have an extremely high employment rate during seasonal shifts, finding the best employees can be a challenge. Make no mistake: SB 11 should be viewed by you and your colleagues as a welcome mat of sorts. Upon enactment, we will be sending a strong message to prospective employees and visitors: "you are welcome in Ohio, you are valued in Ohio, and you will be protected from unlawful discrimination in Ohio."

Gay and straight Ohioans should expect to be treated in a manner that reflects who we are and what we value. Equality is the law.

Too often, policymakers make pronouncements about how and what will make Ohio's small businesses thrive. I can assure you that this legislation, unlike many others, will increase my opportunities to hire more people, serve more people, and grow.

Sincerely,

Chris Redfern
Rocky Point Winery
The Red Fern Inn
The Pink Perch

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