

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and the members of the House Civil Justice Committee, my name is Daphne Slusher, and I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act.

I am a B.S. Psychology major and a volunteer for Equality Ohio. I am a non-heterosexual woman who has been in a gay relationship for over two years. I have been in Columbus, Ohio since the fall of 2017 and before that, I grew up in a small town in Kentucky, near Nashville, TN. In this town, every person who identified as LGBTQ was ridiculed and discriminated against. One of my closest friends identified as a transgender woman and every day she faced hate for who she was. She was beaten down so much that she had to change high schools, which brought her to my high school. All this time, I thought my high school was much better than the others and that there was no such thing as discrimination, at least not in my good neighborhood. However, that was not the case. Her first day with us, she was beaten outside the back of our school because some of the students found out about her transgender identity via students from her previous high school.

To me, this is what Ohio feels like. We look at our beautiful state and think nothing wrong could ever happen, to any of us. However, for a great sum of us, we live in constant fear of losing our friends, family, and our jobs. This is not just a fear for members of the LGBT community, but a fear for all of us, personal identities aside. For most, if not all, we depend on our jobs or our family members' jobs to sustain us, keep a roof over our heads, feed our families, and support those around us that need it.

Personally, I support my poor mother who still lives in my hometown. She struggles to make ends meet, day-to-day, let alone pay all her bills and often times, she goes without eating if I cannot send her money. I work 40+ hours a week all while attending school full-time and maintaining a 3.79 GPA, just to support my mom and to pay my way through school. If my employer were to fire me because of my sexual identity, I would be devastated. There is not another job I could get at this moment to support both myself and my mom. Ultimately, if I was fired. I would have to end my education and return home, never making a life of my own. I am not the only one in this situation; there are countless people that live in the same fear as myself, every day.

I have accepted who I am. The real question is, can Ohio accept me, too?

Please vote yes on House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Daphne Slusher