

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Minority Member Brown, and the members of the House Civil Justice Committee, my name is David T. Abbott and I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 369.

The passage of House Bill 369 and, with it, the guarantee to all LGBTQ Ohioans of fairness and inclusion in employment, housing, and public accommodations is essential to the future success of Ohio.

This is an issue of simple justice. In order to fully achieve the society we want – in both reality and reputation - passage of laws such as the one being considered today is a necessity. The Ohio Fairness Act is a forward-looking, smart solution to address a problem that should have been addressed many years ago - discrimination against our LGBTQ community members. Ohio ought to join the growing list of states that are adopting statewide non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ citizens across the country.

This is also an economic issue, Ohio is a global competition for talent to fuel our economic future. Although I am submitting this testimony as an individual, I am acutely aware of the talent needs of Ohio business through my work at The George Gund Foundation, the Fund for Our Economic Future and TeamNEO. In addition to growing, educating, and training hardworking Ohioans, we must also throw wide our doors of welcome to talented people across the country who are seeking a place to work hard, put down roots, and contribute to civic life. It is evident that talented young people are disproportionately attracted to vibrant, diverse, open minded places. Passing House Bill 369 will be another step toward making Ohio the stronger talent magnet we all need it to be.

I urge you to pass the Ohio Fairness Act this session.