

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

I am a born and raised Ohioan, and I'm proud to be a Buckeye. We are a state that was, at one time, considered the frontier of the nation. Ohio was the destination of my ancestors, immigrating nearly two centuries ago from Germany. They landed in Cincinnati and made their way north to the rich farmland in the west-central part of the state to build their lives basking in the welcoming beacon that was Ohio. The families of such luminaries as Jesse Owens and Toni Morrison migrated to Ohio for that same opportunity. We are a state of innovators; my own hometown of Dayton once boasted more inventors and patents per capita than any other city in the country. We are a state of achievers, undaunted by a status quo: where would we be if Orville and Wilbur Wright, John Glenn, and Neil Armstrong had not looked to the stars and defied gravity?

In that spirit, recognizing Ohio's history as a place of welcome and of forward thinkers, it is dismaying that our state's legislative body has not yet acted to assure all who live, work, and play here that they will be protected from discrimination. When an LGBTQ individual can reside in one city and lose protections as they drive to work in another city, simply due to how they identify as a person, the message that we send is one of rebuff. Rebuke. We can and should change this. Let's send a signal that Ohio is open for business, open for innovation, open for all who wish to share their talents with us. Let's make Ohio that welcoming beacon again.

Accordingly, today I urge you to pass House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.