

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

As a student, I feel it is extremely necessary for my LGBTQ+ peers to experience the same rights as I will post-graduation as we begin our job searches. The right to maintain employment, housing, and public accommodations should be a right for all people, regardless of their sexual orientation. Although I am not a member of the LGBTQ+ community myself, I am surrounded by hardworking LGBTQ+ peers everyday who have overcome many barriers to reach the point of success that they are at, and they deserve to have the same opportunities that I do in their lives beyond college. Nondiscrimination policies will ensure that they have the same rights as I do, the rights that they, and everyone else, deserves.

Equality matters in Ohio because the people of Ohio matter. When groups of Ohioans are allowed to be discriminated against, we all lose. If we deny the rights of our citizens, then we fail to uphold the values that we claim to uphold as citizens of a free country. Not only is protecting LGBTQ+ folks from discrimination the correct thing to do, but it also supports our communities. LGBTQ+ folks are contributing members to communities and businesses across the state and discriminating against them hurts our communities and our state as a whole. By providing an inclusive and equitable environment for LGBTQ+ folks, we create a brighter future for Ohio's economy and all of our citizens.

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

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Francesca Varga