

Dear Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and the members of the House Civil Justice Committee, My name is Ginny Telego and I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill HB369, the Ohio Fairness Act.

As a small business owner who partners with several members of the LGBTQ community to provide leadership development and other programs, I am passionate about eliminating LGBTQ discrimination in employment, housing and other areas where this discrimination prevents people from pursuing their potential and contributing to the success of Ohio. One of my colleagues, who is dedicated to helping youth and adults who have experienced trauma, has been “asked” to leave two separate employers due to her being married to a woman. I am deeply troubled by this practice and feel it is extremely unfair for a business to have the right to this discriminatory practice. While I understand those organizations felt that having a gay woman working for them went against their religious beliefs, it is disturbing to think that qualified people might be refused employment because of someone’s perception of what is “right” or “wrong” as it relates to one’s sexual orientation.

This issue matters to me because I work with several members of the LGBTQ community and it is time for Ohio to step up and protect those who experience discrimination based on their gender identity and/or sexual orientation. We can not sit back and continue to allow these antiquated practices that negatively impact our economy and our communities by creating environments that are not inclusive.

Protecting LGBTQ folks from discrimination is not only the right thing to do - it’s also essential for attracting and retaining hardworking, talented employees and businesses. The Ohio Fairness Act will create a more inclusive and equitable environment for LGBTQ Ohioans while improving our state’s economic competitiveness for everyone. Ohio’s business and government representatives expend a great deal of energy talking about the challenges in finding qualified workers - this issue could be tremendously reduced by creating a more inclusive and equitable Ohio, where community members are not discriminated against because of who they love or because of their gender identity.

I strongly advocate that the Ohio Legislature votes to support House Bill HB369 and show the country that Ohio truly is a place where everyone is accepted for who they are.

Thank you in advance for your efforts to bring this bill to the floor and I look forward to seeing it pass.

Respectfully,
Ginny Telego, President and Founder
The Collaboration Partners
720 County Road 1754
Ashland, OH 44805
419-651-6854