

## HB369 Testimony

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

I was born and raised in southeastern Ohio and educated at Ohio University and The Ohio State University. I am an attorney by profession and a higher education administrator at Ohio University. I write today on behalf of my family, not my employer. I am personally committed to the betterment of the State of Ohio and the financial well-being of my region. I am a member of the Equality Ohio 501(c)(4) Board.

My husband and I, together with our family, support passage of SB11. We have three children – a daughter in graduate school, a son who is a junior in college, and another daughter who is a senior in high school. Our oldest daughter Megan graduated from college in May 2018, works full-time, and is a part-time MBA student at Tiffin University. Megan is smart, compassionate, a hard worker, and hopes to remain in Ohio as her father and I have done. Last summer, Megan married another, equally smart, compassionate, and hardworking young woman on July 1, 2018 – the same day as my wedding anniversary in 1989 and my parents before me in 1950. Our daughter-in-law is also employed full-time and is a part-time graduate student. They are currently living in Ohio but are looking to the future to decide whether Ohio will be welcoming to them as individuals and as a married couple.

As Megan's parents, each day we consider how her life will be if she stays in this state. Will she and her wife be able to secure housing and better employment opportunities? Will she and her wife be able to live their lives without literal and figurative doors closing to them because of their relationship and marriage? Will they be safe?

As a parent ally, I write today on behalf of my daughter and also on behalf of your sons and daughters, and all other people, young and old, who are residents of this great state or who seek to move here, to do business here, and to contribute to our society openly, honestly, and without fear of harm or legal exclusion.

Non-discrimination laws and policy are an important part of creating safe and inclusive learning, living, and working environments and strong communities. Our great state includes people from all walks of life, from every country in the world, with different beliefs, passions, talents, and skills. All seek to live freely, to be judged by their character and contributions to society. Our state's economic interests are well-served by making it clear that we want the best and brightest, the most innovative, the most passionate, that we welcome all who seek to work and contribute to our economy, our industries, our educational and health care systems. We do not want to turn away talent and dedication simply by denying the most basic of freedoms – to live and love, to marry and raise a family without fear.

As a lifelong resident and voter, it is so heartening to know that there is such support among our legislature to clarify that Ohio is a safe, welcoming, and inclusive state. Honorable members of this committee, as a lawyer, educator, life-long resident of southeastern Ohio, and Megan's mom, I urge you to support HB369.