

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

Have you ever known anyone with an inner light so true and bright that she spreads happiness wherever she goes? I do. No matter with whom she is interacting, this young woman exudes positivism and caring, and is always sensitive to what other people may be going through. She has advocated for bridging differences and finding common ground since her college years where she was a leader in the Interfaith Youth Core headed by Eboo Patel. Then for 4 years after college, she dedicated herself to helping the underserved in Ohio. It's extremely disturbing that this extraordinary human being can face discrimination in the state of Ohio due to her sexual orientation.

That any human being, regardless of their physical status, should be denied any right accorded to other citizens, or have any civil right abridged, is incompatible with the principles of democracy. A person born with one blue eye and one brown eye may have faced ostracism in the past, but today we know that genetic variations are nature's way of searching for successful adaptations. We may not subject a child born with atypical primary sex organs to discrimination, but for some inexplicable reason persons born with less visible variations (e.g.: sex characteristics governed by hormonal and brain chemistry variables such as sexual orientation or gender identity) are deemed less worthy of civil rights protections than humans without those particular genetic variations.

The realm of science, which relies on observation, collection of evidence, and data analysis from the natural world, differs from the realm of religion, which relies on the faith and belief encompassing the spiritual world. House Bill 369 will not affect existing religious exemptions that are currently present in Ohio law. But House Bill 369 will base Ohio's law on a solid foundation of science and ethics, as was the intent of the Founders. When the Ohio Gen. Assembly regularly pledges allegiance to the flag, they do not pledge "with liberty and justice for those conforming to specific genetic coding". Instead, they pledge "with liberty and justice for all".

Please vote YES on House Bill 369.

Thank you for your time and consideration.