

Testimony for H.B. 369  
Representative Stephen D. Hambley  
House Civil Justice Committee

Caleb Hineman

Vice President of the Undergraduate Student Government at The Ohio State University

Email: hineman.7@osu.edu

Thursday, November 19th, 2020

Support H.B. 369

Dear Chairman Hambley, Vice Chairman Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and Members of the House Civil Justice Committee:

My name is Caleb Hineman, and I am the Vice President of the Undergraduate Student Government at The Ohio State University. Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony in support of The Ohio Fairness Act, which will undoubtedly expand necessary protections for students on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.

As the Vice President of the student body, which consists of 53,669 undergraduate students, I have the unique opportunity as an elected representative to advocate for the rights of Ohio State students across the entire state of Ohio. I have made it a priority to serve all of my constituents by advocating for an inclusive environment on campus. Similar to your responsibility to protect the life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness of Ohio citizens, it is my responsibility to extend these protections to Ohio State students. It is for this reason that I believe that the Ohio Fairness Act is vital to extend the liberties of Ohio State students. This bill is about service to Ohioans who deserve to have protections codified into law. As a representative of these students, I am here to strongly support the current version of House Bill 369.

No student in the state of Ohio should face discrimination on the basis of who they are. These future leaders should never have to worry about being denied a lease at their off-campus apartment, access to mental health services or fear expressing their sexual orientation or gender identity. The lack of legal protection for LGBTQ+ citizens under Ohio law has prevented students from expressing their true identities and created regular occurrences of discrimination in these student's lives. A failure to address these gross injustices will result in further perpetuation of discriminatory practices.

In a 2020 LGBTQ+ Campus Climate Survey conducted at Ohio State, a significant number of LGBTQ+ students said that they had experienced discrimination on OSU's campus based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, and these respondents also

reported feeling uncomfortable expressing their true identity or identities on campus. No number of students experiencing discrimination is acceptable to me, both as a leader and as a person. Living in fear of discrimination and knowing that there is currently a lack of legal repercussions for such hate, undoubtedly hinders one's personal, educational, and professional development, which can negatively impact oneself and the community around them.

As a student, I absolutely recognize the unique time in which this bill comes to a hearing. Many LGBTQ+ students struggle with ongoing discrimination on the basis of their gender identity and sexual orientation. This is only exacerbated by the global COVID-19 pandemic, producing hardships in housing, employment, and receiving basic goods and services. All of which directly impacts a student's ability to engage with their education and contribute to the surrounding community. It is imperative that you serve your constituency to alleviate these stressors during and after the pandemic.

As a leader of the Ohio State community, I know that all of our student's lives are enriched by the inclusion and expression of all individuals. Building our community on the principles of justice and equity is absolutely necessary as elected officials. Our community's strength is reliant on the protection of all Ohio State students, and our future contributions to Ohio depends on these immediate protective actions. In our positions of elected power, it is our responsibility to stand up for the needs of our constituencies, and my advocacy cannot compensate for a legal lack of protections. This responsibility extends to you all as representatives for the state of Ohio.

As a representative of the students, it is my responsibility to advocate for this bill as it directly impacts the safety and wellbeing of Ohio State's LGBTQ+ Community. I strongly support the current version of House Bill 369. This bill demonstrates a commitment to equality and liberty for LGBTQ+ citizens. For the benefit of the students we represent and the citizens of Ohio, we at The Ohio State University urge the committee to support this bill. Thank you for your time and for this opportunity to testify. If you have any questions, I am more than happy to answer them.