

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

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Support H.B. 369

Hello Chairman Hambley and the entire House Civil Justice Committee. My name is Ose Arheghan and I am a student at The Ohio State University. I am here to strongly support the current version of House Bill 369.

Currently, I am the Chair of Ohio State University's Undergraduate Black Caucus, lifelong Ohioan, and proud member of the LGBTQ+ community. I also represent The Ohio State University as a Campus Ambassador and 20 Under 20 Rising Star for GLAAD, one of the largest LGBTQ+ advocacy nonprofits in the country.

When I was in high school I and many of my LGBTQ+ peers experienced varying levels of discrimination and targeted harassment. We spent much of our high school career advocating for inclusive protections for LGBTQ+ youth and were able to work with our district's Board of Education to add sexual orientation and gender identity to our anti-discrimination policy. This was a win for our district specifically, however not every LGBTQ+ student in Ohio is as fortunate. The lack of structural supports in place for LGBTQ+ Ohioans led many of my peers to leave the state to continue their education. This is a trend I continue to see as many of the LGBTQ+ friends here at Ohio State leave Ohio for grad school and work opportunities with no intention to return. Ohio loses talented and intelligent members of the LGBTQ+ community who opt to leave and settle down in states with more affirming laws. House Bill 369 would go a long way towards keeping them here to add to the cultural diversity of our great state.

Making the decision to stay in Ohio for university was a difficult one for me. I accepted a full ride scholarship at The Ohio State University, and while I am proud to be a Buckeye, sometimes I can't help but wonder what my experience might have been like preparing for the workforce in a more LGBTQ+ inclusive state. I take pride in the small moments where Ohio makes strides for LGBTQ+ folks, like when my high school updated their anti-discrimination policy, or when Ohio State crowned me their first openly transgender homecoming royal, however, I also want to see my elected officials making an effort to support LGBTQ+ lives. LGBTQ+ Ohioans deserve to see progressive and inclusive policy come from the Statehouse. Every LGBTQ+ Ohioan deserves to be protected from workplace discrimination, not just those who live in certain counties.

As I enter my final years at Ohio State and begin the transition to my professional career as an adult, I can't help but consider my time in Ohio coming to an end. When I think about the reality of starting a family as an out member of the LGBTQ+ community, entering the workforce as an out member of LGBTQ+ community, and finding a community of friends and colleagues to

share my successes with, the lack of structural support for LGBTQ+ Ohioans keeps me from imagining that future here.

For the benefit of the students at The Ohio State University and the citizens of Ohio, I strongly urge the committee to support this bill. Thank you for your time and this opportunity to testify. If you have any questions, I am more than happy to answer them.