



Sponsor Testimony on House Bill 352  
State Representatives George Lang and Jon Cross  
Senate Judiciary Committee

Rep. Cross:

Chairman Eklund, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and Members of the Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee. Representative Lang and I are here to provide sponsor testimony today for House Bill 352, the Employment Law Uniformity Act.

The Employment Law Uniformity Act aims to improve Ohio's workplace discrimination laws by allowing for timely, fair, and efficient resolution of claims for both employers and employees. The bill would amend and enact provisions that will give employees more time to file administrative claims with the Ohio Civil Rights Commission, reduce the nation's longest workplace discrimination statute of limitation, prevent the simultaneous filing of administrative and judicial actions, amend the definition of a private employer, create an affirmative defense, and reduce confusion related to Ohio's age discrimination statutes.

The legislation comes to this committee with bi-partisan support. The House Civil Justice Committee moved the legislation in May after a bi-partisan vote and on November 19<sup>th</sup> the House voted the bill out of our chamber by an overwhelmingly bi-partisan vote of 76 to 13.

We urge your favorable consideration of this important pro-business legislation because for far too long, Ohio employers have dealt with overburdensome and confusing workplace laws that put them at a competitive disadvantage. Under HB 352, we make balanced and reasonable reforms to these laws that balance the interests of employers and employees.

As an indication of the balanced reforms included by the legislation, the Ohio Civil Rights Commission testified as a proponent and no employment attorneys or their associations testified in opposition during the House's committee process.

With this committee's support, Ohio will be one step closer to finalizing a key reform that will improve Ohio's anti-discrimination statutes for both employers and employees. Those reforms will make Ohio a more business friendly state while also preserving important protections for employees to pursue justice when they have been subjected to discrimination. I will now pass it along to my joint sponsor, Representative Lang, to explain how the bill will help our legal climate.

Rep. Lang:

Chairman Eklund, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and Members of the Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on HB 352. This bill is a significant piece of pro-business legislation that simplifies the legal system and makes several common sense changes to promote Ohio towards a more business friendly climate.

Moving Ohio to a position that is more in line with Federal Law gives businesses more certainty about their own potential liability. This legislation will also help lower operating and legal costs for employers. No longer will they have to defend the same claim in different venues simultaneously, and no longer will they be required to retain records for years. A significant, tangible cost savings will result for business by removing the necessity to retain six years of documents. More and more, document retention is becoming a cost driver for business. HB 352 limiting the need to only two years, will remove a key burden on businesses and will help lessen the complexity of operating in the state of Ohio.

A recent US Chamber of Commerce survey found that 89 percent of respondents reported that a state's legal climate likely impacts where a company locates or operates. When that same survey finds that Ohio had 15<sup>th</sup> worst legal climate in United States, it becomes apparent changes are needed. Passage of this bill is a key tool to unleashing investment and commerce in our state. This bill will help Ohio to flourish and will be one more tool in the toolbox of making Ohio a state to grow current businesses, and to attract new ones.

Mr. Chairman, let us continue working towards making Ohio the most business friendly state in the nation. We urge you to pass HB 352. We are happy to take any questions from the committee.