



Ohio House Government Oversight Committee | Testimony in Support of HB 467 | May 14, 2024

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify **in support of** HB 467, a bill that would further assure fair and equal *representation* and *participation* in our democratic processes.

As an organization that works to protect civil rights guaranteed under the law, we cherish the fundamental principle that democracy must include all voices, regardless of race, gender identity, or any other characteristic. We also believe that arbitrary barriers that punish only certain people exacerbate inequality.

There are many very legitimate reasons why someone would want to change their name and not disclose it. For example, domestic violence victims that could be put in danger if found by an abusive family member. Transgender people also have a right to privacy rather than their forced outing via this rule. Indeed, given the hostile political climate we are living in, many trans people have already been put in dangerous situations and been made to feel unsafe due to being targeted specifically for their gender identity. A rule that requires forced outing despite a Court already weighing in on the issue is gratuitous, unnecessary harm.

We have witnessed a troubling trend of certain elected officials exploiting loopholes and enacting discriminatory legislation to exclude minorities from essential rights, such as access to healthcare, housing, and, more recently, the opportunity to run for office.

One egregious example of this discrimination occurred during the recent March 2024 primary elections. Three transgender candidates in our state faced challenges to their eligibility based on an obscure, rarely used rule. Despite no mention of any requirement to disclose deadnames in the candidate instructions provided by the Secretary of State, these individuals were arbitrarily targeted, and, in one case, even disqualified from running for office. **This selective application of a rarely-invoked law not only undermines the principles of fairness and equality but also threatens the very foundation of our democracy.**

Furthermore, we must hold each branch of government to a high standard of accountability. When a court orders a name change, it should not be necessary for a candidate to disclose it. Legal recognition should extend to all aspects of public life, including candidacy for elected office. Requiring transgender individuals to disclose



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their deadnames despite already having received an official court decision on the matter not only disregards their legal rights but also perpetuates discrimination and marginalization.

House Bill 467 represents a crucial step towards rectifying these injustices and ensuring that all Ohioans, regardless of gender identity, have an equal opportunity to participate in the democratic process. **By revising the rules governing candidate eligibility, this legislation will help dismantle barriers that have historically disenfranchised marginalized communities, including transgender individuals.** By explicitly prohibiting discriminatory practices and promoting inclusivity, HB 467 reaffirms our commitment to a democracy that truly represents all people.

I urge you to support Ohio House Bill 467 and stand on the right side of history by promoting fairness, equality, and justice for all Ohioans. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Morgan Zickes
Public Policy Manager
Equality Ohio