

Thank you, honorable members of the committee, for both giving me this space to speak and for reviewing my testimony. I am the Events Coordinator of Plexus, Ohio's largest LGBT & Allied Chamber of Commerce, where our focus is on supporting small businesses to be successful in today's modern economic climate, helping LGBTQ professionals continue to call Ohio home through support and advocacy, and championing the DEI efforts of over 40 large companies throughout Ohio.

While I firmly believe there are moral and ethical reasons why HB 68 should not pass, there is also importance in recognizing the negative economic impact that such legislation would have on our state. A more inclusive and welcoming environment is not just a social imperative; it is also beneficial for business. Inclusive policies attract a diverse and talented workforce, fostering an environment where everyone feels valued and respected. By championing diversity, Ohio can position itself as a state that values equality, contributing to a positive business climate that will foster economic growth now and in the future. Such legislation sends a regressive message that contradicts the principles of equality and inclusivity that Ohio should strive to embody. Moreover, it will only make Ohio a state where individuals and families do not believe they have a future here.

Businesses have taken hostile legislation such as this into account when determining where they should grow and build, and passing legislation that targets trans and gender non-conforming youth will have a deleterious effect moving forward. Ohio should be making decisions that foster growth and encourage businesses to move to our great state, which this legislation would harm and stifle. It is in the best interest of the state both socially and economically, to reject House Bill 68 and to work towards providing an environment that embraces diversity and supports the rights of all its residents. Transgender or cisgender, queer or straight: we are all Ohioans who deserve to live our lives and make the decisions we believe are best for our children with the help and guidance of care providers and family.

In conclusion, we at Plexus support transgender youth in their continued access of doctor recommended medical care, as well as their ability to participate in youth athletics as their genuine selves. This support can improve their mental and physical health and promote their overall well-being. As members of the business community, we recognize the importance of promoting inclusivity and diversity and believe that supporting transgender youth is a step towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society and strongly encourage you to do the same. I implore you to please vote no on HB 68.

Sincerely,

Shauna Adkison

(she/her)

Plexus LGBT + Allied Chamber of Commerce | Events Coordinator