



**State Senator Nickie J. Antonio - District 23**  
**State Senator Kent Smith - District 21**

Senate Transportation Committee  
October 11, 2023  
Sponsor Testimony SB 160

**Senator Smith:**

Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio and fellow members of the Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for providing myself and my Joint Sponsor the opportunity to advocate for the passage of Senate Bill 160 which would create a license plate for the nonpartisan organization Equality Ohio.

First, a little bit about the history of Equality Ohio. In 2005, sixty-five people, diverse in gender, race, religion, and region of Ohio, met in a Columbus church basement. After two long days, Equality Ohio was born and its vision was and remains: to help create an Ohio that everyone can call home.

Quick Facts about Ohio's LGBTQ+ Community (from the Movement Advancement Project, 2019 & 2020): Online link [here](#).

- Total LGBTQ Population (13+) - 462,000
- Percent of Workforce that is LGBTQ - 5%
- Total LGBTQ Workers - 298,000
- Percent of LGBTQ Adults (25+) Raising Children - 30%

Equality Ohio wants to help Ohioans reach lived and legal equality.

Our friends in the federal office share this goal.

On November 29, 2022, the Senate voted 61–36 to pass the Respect for Marriage Act. Voting in favor of the bill were 49 Democrats and 12 Republicans including Ohio Senator Rob Portman. Following the vote, Senator Portman’s office released a statement that included the following.

“This is a momentous day in the Senate and I am proud of my colleagues whose hard work made passage of this bill possible. The American people want this issue settled, and with the

passage of this bill, millions of married couples will get the certainty and peace of mind they deserve by having their marriage protected."

On December 8, 2022, the House passed (258–169–1) the Senate's version of the Act, with 39 Republicans voting in favor of this legislation. On December 13, 2022, the Respect for Marriage Act was signed into law.

Let us learn the lesson of Psalms 118:22 which reads: "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."

So fellow members of the Committee, I would ask that you see no stranger among your fellow 11.7 million Ohioans, that you not discard the cornerstone, and support Senate Bill 160 to create an Equality Ohio license plate.

### **Minority Leader Antonio:**

I am proud to join my colleague in asking for your support of the Equality Ohio License Plate which will support the advocacy for efforts leading to full equality for members of the LGBTQ community.

As a member of this community, it is fitting that we are providing testimony on this bill today, October 11th, which is National Coming Out Day. A day honoring and celebrating those from the LGBTQ community who live openly and genuinely, even in challenging times where it continues to be dangerous for some to come out and be their authentic selves.

And while the legal advances have certainly been made, full equality continues to elude us, and so the work continues. This license plate can serve as solace to the thousands of members of the LGBTQ community, their family members and supportive allies.

They understand that if Ohio truly is the "Heart of it All," then we can support the work of including all Ohioans in our hearts and support their right to exist and prosper in our state. It is for those who share that sentiment that the Equality Ohio License Plate will be created to symbolize their support.

Thank you and we are happy to answer any questions you may have.