



June 10, 2025 | Testimony in Opposition HB 262: Natural Family Day Month | Community Revitalization Committee

Chair Click, Vice Chair Mullins, Ranking Member Brewer, and members of the Community Revitalization Committee.

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony today. My name is Dwayne Steward, and I am the Executive Director of Equality Ohio. We are a 20-year strong organization providing advocacy and legal support to Ohio's LGBTQ+ community. Our mission is to create lived and legal equality for all Ohioians.

I submit this testimony in opposition of House Bill 262, not only on behalf of Equality Ohio, but also as a father. I also appear today on behalf of my own family, and the many families, who would be harmed by the discrimination this bill would codify into Ohio law.

I namely take issue with the phrase "natural family" and its dangerous connotations. The idea that the state of Ohio should declare which families are 'natural' — and by implication, which are not — is deeply offensive to the millions of Ohioans raised by single parents, grandparents, adoptive families, or same-sex couples. That's not family values. That's government overreach.

It was only a few generations ago when interracial couples were told their love was unnatural. Now this legislature wants to resurrect that same mindset by labeling some families as more legitimate than others. This bill echoes that same bigoted logic, but this time under the guise of increasing population rate, which has many other nondiscriminatory ways to accomplish.

We adopted our son, Quinten, less than two years ago because of Ohio's foster care crisis. There are 15,000 kids fighting for their lives in our broken foster care system. I wish the sponsors of this bill would spend more time addressing the real issues that are right in front of us. Instead creating a solution looking for a problem, which is what this bill does.

Instead of solving real problems, this bill is a taxpayer-funded lecture on morality. It uses the statehouse to divide families and distract from concerns in our state that we actually should be focused on like the economy, public safety, and education.

The sponsors of this testimony claim this isn't about exclusion, but the founders of the Natural Family Foundation, a national organization that has been pushing this bill in statehouses across the country, makes it very clear that Natural Family Month is meant to promote a discriminatory agenda. Their mission expressly defines only those in relationships that consist of "one biological born man, woman in a lifelong monogamous relationship with their biological children" as natural and worth receiving the designation of family.



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Is a widow raising her kids alone not a real family? Is an adoptive family built through years of struggle less 'natural'? This bill tells Ohio veterans, survivors, and caregivers their love doesn't count. This is simply cruel, and does not represent the majority of Ohioans.

First they call your family 'unnatural.' Next they'll say you can't adopt, foster, or teach. This isn't just symbolic—it's a slippery slope that creates a two-tiered system of families, and makes my family second class.

Ohio House Bill 262 is more than just bad policy—it is a calculated act of strategic erasure. This bill, if passed, will tell Ohioans if you're not a heterosexual, monogamous couple with children—led by a biological male from the family lineage—you don't count as a family at all.

This bill is part of a national effort to police family structures and control birthing bodies, cloaked in the language of tradition but rooted in exclusion and control.

Equality Ohio unequivocally condemns HB 262 and urges this committee to reject this discriminatory and dehumanizing legislation.

Thank you again for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions.