



Chair Click, Vice Chair Mullins, Ranking Member Brewer, and Members of the House Community Revitalization Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to House Bill 262 (HB262), which seeks to designate “Natural Family Month.” I’m submitting this testimony in my role as the Executive Director of LOVEboldly, an Ohio, faith-based organization working to create spaces where LGBTQIA+ people can flourish in Christianity. I also serve as Pastor of Blue Ocean Faith Columbus and am a public theologian deeply committed to the progressive Christian understanding of God's radical inclusivity and expansive love.

As a person of faith, I believe that all legislation should reflect the highest moral principles of our shared humanity. House Bill 262, while ostensibly celebrating families, fundamentally contradicts the core Christian values of radical inclusivity and unconditional love that define my faith tradition and that of countless progressive Christians across Ohio.

The term “natural family,” as employed in this legislation, creates a harmful hierarchy among families that is antithetical to the Gospel message. Progressive Christianity recognizes that the divine image is reflected in every person, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or family structure. When we create legislative language that implicitly designates some families as “natural” and others as presumably “unnatural,” we violate the fundamental Christian principle that all people are created in the image and likeness of God.

Jesus’ ministry offers a clear theological framework for understanding family. Christ consistently challenged the social boundaries of the first century, welcoming those whom society had marginalized and expanding the definition of who belonged in God's family. Jesus declared that “whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother,” fundamentally redefining family beyond biological or traditional structures. This expansive understanding of kinship calls us to celebrate all loving, committed family relationships rather than privileging some over others.

Furthermore, God’s expansive love knows no boundaries or limitations. The Apostle Paul reminds us that “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” This profound theological truth applies equally to family structures. God’s love encompasses single-parent households, blended families, chosen families, grandparents raising grandchildren, and yes, LGBTQIA+ families. To suggest through legislative language that only certain family configurations are “natural” diminishes the sacred reality that love, commitment, and care—not gender composition or biological connection—define what makes a family holy.

HB262’s language creates particular harm for LGBTQIA+ Ohioans and their families. By implicitly categorizing their families as something other than “natural,” this legislation sends a clear message of exclusion and second-class citizenship. As people of faith, we are called to be instruments of God’s peace and love, not architects of division and marginalization. The psychological and spiritual harm

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inflicted upon LGBTQIA+ individuals and families when their government refuses to recognize their relationships as equally valid cannot be overstated.

The Christian tradition has long understood that the Spirit of God moves through diverse expressions of human love and commitment. Many of our faith communities have witnessed firsthand the profound spiritual gifts that LGBTQIA+ individuals and families bring to our congregations and communities. Their love, faithfulness, and dedication to one another and to their children reflect the same divine image present in all families. To exclude them through legislative fiat violates our deeply held belief in the universal worth and dignity of every person.

If Ohio truly wishes to celebrate families, we should embrace language that honors all family structures built on foundations of love, commitment, and mutual care. A more faithful approach would celebrate the diversity of ways that Ohioans create loving homes and raise children, recognizing that family strength comes not from conforming to a narrow definition but from the presence of love, stability, and support.

The Gospel calls us to expand our understanding of kinship, not to restrict it. Jesus's own family experience challenges traditional family norms—raised by a single mother after his father's apparent early death, surrounded by disciples who became his chosen family, and consistently welcoming outcasts into his inner circle. If we are to follow Christ's example, we must resist legislation that creates artificial boundaries around who deserves recognition and celebration.

As Ohio legislators, you have the opportunity to demonstrate moral leadership that reflects the best of our faith traditions. Christians across this state call upon you to reject House Bill 262's exclusionary language and instead pursue legislation that celebrates all Ohio families equally. True family values are reflected not in narrow definitions but in broad embrace of love in all its authentic expressions.

The God I serve loves expansively and includes radically. House Bill 262 reflects neither divine love nor human justice. I urge you to oppose this legislation and instead champion policies that honor the sacred dignity present in every Ohio family.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these deeply held convictions rooted in Christian faith.

Respectfully submitted,

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