

To whom it may concern,

My name is Joe Rampe, and I am the Finance Lead for JustChoice, an organization that helps ALL families build their families. I am writing in to testify against H.B. 262.

I am a single dad of a three-year-old via adoption, and am disheartened to learn that my family is not considered a "Natural Family", based on the language in H.B. 262.

I work hard every day to provide for my son, and every day, I tell him that we are a family. If this bill passes, the implication is that we are NOT a "natural family", and to me, that is not only inappropriate, but extremely insulting. What language would those who wrote the bill use to call our family? An "Un-Natural Family"?

I am writing in on behalf of all single parents. For those who are not single parents, it's hard to explain just how hard life can be as a single parent. I imagine that there aren't many single parents that were part of creating H.B. 262, because if there were, they would be extremely insulted as well.

As a single parent, the odds are stacked against you in many ways. A full one third of my paychecks goes towards childcare, and there are no breaks for single parents. Luckily, I have family who can provide respite when needed; a luxury that many single parents do not have. I also have only one child, and cannot imagine how hard life is for the single parents out there who have multiple children.

The last thing that single parents need is more hardship, and this bill, whether intentionally or unintentionally, creates that for single parents.

Not only is the language in this bill insulting to single parents, it's insulting to every parent and every person who has any compassion in their bodies. I have several friends in the LGBTQIA+ community, and this bill is a direct slap in the face to them; and this time, it is very clearly intentional.

Saying that a "Natural Family" is "one biological born man and woman in a lifelong, committed, monogamous relationship with their biological and/or adopted children" is not only harmful, but hateful towards the LGBTQIA+ community. I work for an adoption agency, and several of our most successful placements have been with the LGBTQIA+ community. They are amazing parents, and do everything they can to provide for their children.

One such family was placed with a child who spent the first several months of their life in the NICU. This family not only loved on their child, but was with them every step of the way, as at least one of them was always with the child throughout their stay in the NICU. Now, their child

is happy and healthy, despite continued trips to the doctor for frequent checkups. They stepped up for their child because they loved them dearly. This bill is the antithesis of that love.

We have another family whose daughter is transgender. This family and their daughter are literal saints on earth, and the best people I know. Their daughter has faced scrutiny and hate at an age when she should be enjoying every minute of life, often because our state has created a harmful living experience for her. She gets bullied because the bullies and their parents are entitled based on how our state treats the LGBTQIA+ community through legislation and messaging such as this bill. This family is currently providing respite care for a teenager and has been for many months, and this family has provided respite care for many other single parents in need of help. They have touched the lives of so many others, and do so happily and full of love. This bill is the equivalent of spitting in their faces. This world would be a worse place without them, the family I described previously, and the thousands of other single parents and LGBTQIA+ parents in our state.

In summary, this bill is shameful, harmful, and hateful. If this bill passes, we are telling the thousands and thousands of single parents and LGBTQIA+ parents in Ohio that they are “less than”.

We are not “less than”. We are loving, caring parents who fight for our children’s happiness every day. We are the definition of “natural family”.

Sincerely,

Joe Rampe

JustChoice Finance Lead