

Chair Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Minority Member Thomas, and the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Amy Lowe and I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 11, the Ohio Fairness Act.

I urge you to vote in favor of passing SB11, the Ohio Fairness Act. My 18 year old daughter is a member of the LGBTQ+ community, I volunteer at Wright State University with the Office of LGBTQA Affairs, and I am the Chapter Leader of Free Mom Hugs Ohio. Neither my own child nor the people with whom I volunteer are currently protected from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in areas of employment, housing and public accommodations. This is completely unacceptable. I know several people who sought jobs in Columbus to have the city's non-discrimination protections, but they were unable to afford housing there, so aren't entirely protected in all aspects of their lives. I know several other LGBTQ+ people who have plans to move out of state when they graduate college, just so they can have the legal protections that cisgender, heterosexual people have; the protections and equal rights that they are entitled to as human beings.

As a mother, this issue is close and personal to me. Do you know what it's like to worry about your child and if they will be denied service at a business or restaurant because of who they are or who they love? Do you know what it's like to worry if your child will find employment because they are confident in themselves and do not hide their gender or sexual identities? Are people in the LGBTQ+ community worth less than those who are cisgender and heterosexual? ALL people should be protected from discrimination; no one deserves to be evicted from their home because of who they are. No hard-working person should be fired from a job because of who they are.

If Ohio wants to remain competitive and attract top talent and employers, then it needs to attract people and businesses through policies that show its commitment to diversity and non-discriminatory, inclusive policies and laws. There have been hundreds of corporations, universities, professional service firms, and small- and medium-sized businesses who have signed on to the Ohio Business Competes coalition, supporting a statewide policy protecting LGBTQ+ people from discrimination. Businesses value this policy and are telling you that they want this in place. How many businesses will leave Ohio if this legislation does not pass? Is that something on which the state is willing to gamble?

I urge you to consider passing this bill to protect not only our children from discrimination, but also to encourage businesses to seek out Ohio as a state which values ALL of its people.

Sincerely,
Amy Lowe