

Chair Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Minority Member Thomas, and the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I, Beth Silvers, submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 11.

I am a business coach, author, and co-host of an internationally-recognized bipartisan political podcast, Pantsuit Politics. While I am a Kentucky resident, I have worked in Ohio for my entire professional career. I currently serve clients in Cincinnati and Columbus, am a board member for two non-profit organizations in Cincinnati, and am active in the Cincinnati business community.

The evidence throughout the United States is clear: inclusive legislation boosts economies, while regressive legislation harms economies. SB 11 is a critical step forward for the Ohio business community. The clients with whom I work and the organizations I help advise as a director must reflect the communities and constituents they serve. They must attract, retain, and promote talented individuals who will eagerly contribute their intellects and time to our communities. Welcoming LGBTQ+ candidates requires that we ensure those candidates that Ohio law protects them. Freedom from discrimination is a baseline requirement.

The evidence is also clear that inclusive nondiscrimination laws do not invite floods of litigation. As studies from the Williams Institute and the Congressional Budget indicate, minimal lawsuits are required to enforce nondiscrimination protection, but the impact is still significant. This bill also does not impose expensive or burdensome requirements on businesses. SB 11 is an expression of authority and compassion rather than one of litigiousness or bureaucracy.

Currently, 22 localities in Ohio offer inclusive nondiscrimination protections. While I commend these cities, this patchwork of expectations is inefficient and ineffective. An individual should not be stripped of protections in the midst of a morning commute from one community to another. Employers should not have varying standards for workplace conduct or the ability to attract talent to one Ohio market but not another. Acting at the state level is important to provide consistent inclusive protection.

Ohio needs inclusive nondiscrimination laws to realize economic opportunities. Cincinnati is a fine example of how inclusive legislation at the local level opens doors to investment, entrepreneurship, and community vibrancy. The entire state should be part of these opportunities. SB 11 should pass because it is right and just; it also is a classic example of how doing good leads to doing well.

Protecting people from discrimination, including people who are gay or transgender, requires nothing more than recognizing our shared humanity. Please allow everyone the freedom to work honestly, contribute to their families and communities, and be judged on their merits.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Respectfully submitted:  
Beth A. Silvers  
2711 Chateau Court  
Union, Kentucky 41091