

Ohio Fairness Act testimony

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

The City of Cleveland Heights, Ohio wholeheartedly supports Senate Bill 11, the Ohio Fairness Act. To us it is a simple matter of justice. For over a decade our community has taken a leadership role in recognition and support of LGBTQ rights. As an example, in 2002 a domestic partner registry was created by a majority ballot vote of our citizens and in that same year our City added sexual orientation as a protected class to our Fair Housing legislation. In 2014 we added the prohibition of LGBTQ discrimination of any kind in Cleveland Heights and created a Fair Practices Board to investigate and process complaints involving discrimination in housing, employment, education and public accommodation.

Our Cleveland Heights commitment to diversity of all kinds has made us stronger and more desirable to people of all ages and backgrounds and lifestyles. This is what a community should be and what the State of Ohio should be communicating to anyone who chooses to live in our State.

It is the obligation and the duty of elected officials to protect all citizens and all Ohioans from discrimination of any kind. For what credible reason can Ohio exclude some of our own citizens from protection in employment, housing and public accommodation? Some have called this the Ohio Fairness Act and that is a true title because it is the fair and just thing to do. It is time to protect the members of the LGBTQ community from prejudice and discrimination through this legislation.

On behalf of the Cleveland Heights City Council, I urge you to pass Senate Bill 11, the Ohio Fairness Act. Thank you for your time and your consideration to this important issue. I would be glad to answer any questions that you might have regarding my testimony.