



Statement in Support of SB11 - The Ohio Fairness Act
John L. Comerford, Ph.D.
President, Otterbein University
May 20, 2019

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

On behalf of Otterbein University, I am urging you to pass SB11 to advance legal equality for the LGBTQ community. Otterbein has long placed value on inclusion, belonging, community, and opportunity. Our story begins before the abolition of slavery, before the women's rights movement, before equality and inclusion were rights. Any one person seeking a better future has been welcomed since Otterbein's doors opened in 1847.

Otterbein admitted women at our founding, students of color before the Civil War, and welcomed Japanese-American students who had been sent to internment camps during World War II. Today our community continues to thrive on the richness of its diversity including faculty, staff, and students who are members of the LGBTQ community.

Otterbein is a member of Ohio Business Competes, which is a strong coalition of over 600 businesses that are committed to promoting an attractive, prosperous, and economically vibrant Ohio. The coalition is made up of small town Ohio businesses as well as multinational corporations that cover a variety of industries including manufacturing, hospitality, banking, and higher education who support LGBTQ-inclusive nondiscrimination policy in Ohio. Multiple chambers of commerce from around the state are members of Ohio Business Competes, too. We believe that adding "sexual orientation" and "gender identity or expression" to Ohio's nondiscrimination laws to protect LGBTQ Ohioans from discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations is long overdue and simply the right thing to do.

We strongly urge you to listen to our diverse coalition in support of this bill. Join our businesses, universities, chambers, and cities that already welcome and protect sexual orientation and identity by passing SB11. Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me at 614-823-1420 or comerford1@otterbein.edu.

Sincerely,

John L. Comerford, Ph.D.
President
Otterbein University