

Senate Judiciary Committee

SB 11 Proponent Testimony

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Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Manning and Ranking Minority Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Daniel Horrigan, Mayor of the City of Akron. I am pleased to offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 11, the Ohio Fairness Act.

In March of 2017, I introduced and signed into law a comprehensive non-discrimination ordinance that established inclusive, local protections against discrimination and created the Akron Civil Rights Commission. Akron's ordinance protects all individuals from discrimination on the basis of "age, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, ancestry, disability, marital status, familial status, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or military status" in housing, employment, and public accommodations. I was honored to champion this legislation because I believe wholeheartedly in treating others how you would like to be treated – with fairness, respect, and dignity.

While 22 municipalities, and counting, have signed non-discrimination ordinances; these inclusive protections must exist statewide if Ohio is going to remain a competitive destination for growing industries, new businesses, the best and brightest workers, and students across the country. It is imperative that the legislature act to ensure that the basic civil rights of all Ohioans are protected. Hundreds of corporations, universities, and small and medium businesses have signed on to the Ohio Business Competes coalition in support of statewide LGBTQ-inclusive nondiscrimination policy because they know that discrimination is bad for business, and bad for Ohio.

Senate Bill 11 is an important and necessary step toward ensuring equal access for all to the basic building blocks of a healthy, productive life - a job, a place to live, every day services and an education. I know that Akron has benefitted from these inclusive protections as we work to create jobs for our residents and attract new residents to our city. The Ohio Fairness Act, if passed and signed into law, will ultimately spur economic development and population growth across the state.

Finally, as a leader who deeply respects religious freedom, the Ohio Fairness Act upholds existing religious exemptions currently in Ohio law, and protections enshrined in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and Article I of the Ohio Constitution. Freedom is not a zero-sum game – ensuring freedom for others does not make any of us less free, in fact, it makes us all stronger.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present testimony. I urge you to pass Senate Bill 11, and enable every Ohioan the opportunity to provide for their family, be judged on their own merit, and build their American dream right here in ‘The Heart of it All’. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this legislation, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Daniel Horrigan
Mayor, City of Akron