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May 9, 2019

The Honorable John Eklund  
Chair, Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee  
1 Capitol Square, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chair Eklund:

It is my pleasure to offer this testimony in support of SB11, the Ohio Fairness Act. I currently serve as a councilperson in the city of Lakewood, Ohio's most densely-populated city and where we proudly passed one of the most comprehensive LGBTQ non-discrimination laws in the state a few years ago. Since the introduction of SB11 has been accompanied by nightmare prognostications from the bill's opponents, I would like to share with you some of the experiences that we have had – or not had, as it were – as a community since passing our ordinance.

First, it's important to know that Lakewood is a community that values acceptance and inclusion of all our residents. When I introduced our nondiscrimination ordinance in early 2016, among our first supporters were high-profile members of Lakewood's business community, the vast majority of whom are small and medium-sized businesses whose proprietors work hard every day to grow and thrive. They know the value of making sure that their employees and customers are welcome and treated fairly. Many of these businesses had internal policies already ensuring that workers and patrons were free from discrimination, and their support of our proposed ordinance was a statement that all of our businesses should be playing by the same rules. We were proud to have the formal endorsement of the Lakewood Chamber of Commerce and other pro-business institutions when our ordinance passed. Despite doom-and-gloom scenarios painted by opponents of SB11, Lakewood has seen near-unprecedented levels of commercial growth and entrepreneurship since we passed our ordinance three years ago. I would also like to note two-thirds of newly-formed Human Rights Commission are small business owners.

As a person of faith and as an American who values religious liberty, I can say with certainty that neither our local ordinance nor SB11 violates anyone's religious freedom. The constitution already makes clear that the government cannot impose upon anyone's freedom to practice and demonstrate their firmly-held beliefs, and nothing in the proposal you are considering would jeopardize that. The Ohio Fairness Act is about guaranteeing *more* liberty for more people, and at no one's expense. I'm proud to say that in three years the city of Lakewood has not received a single claim of religious discrimination as a result of our LGBTQ protection ordinance.

Both in my hometown and across Ohio, our citizens embrace the principles of equality, fairness, and equal justice under the law. When I discuss new laws protecting LGBTQ people from discrimination in housing, education,

employment, and public accomodation, most of my fellow citizens are astonished to learn that such protections are not *already* the law. The concept that all of us should be free to be our true selves at work, at school, in our homes and at our jobs is a fundamental principle that the vast majority of Ohioans embrace. It is my plea that the Ohio legislature embrace it, too, and pass the Ohio Fairness Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel J. O'Malley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Daniel J. O'Malley  
Ward 4

Enclosure: Ord. 1-16