

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

I am a Cleveland homeowner, a community organizer, and someone who came out as queer later in life. This means that I spent many years renting apartments, interviewing for jobs, and accessing resources as someone who appeared straight and cisgender. Over the past few years, as my queer identity has become public, I have seen how discrimination can impact all areas of life for folks who are queer.

I have been questioned by landlords who want to know who is visiting my apartment, and who my partner is, and who worry about my relationship making the neighbors uncomfortable. I have been told by managers and employers that I shouldn't talk about my personal life in the workplace, but when I was dating someone of the opposite gender, I never received any feedback about sharing anecdotes about myself with my colleagues.

I am lucky that I have been able to maintain continual employment, and I have never been evicted; but I have experienced insults, invasive questions, assumptions, and being ignored or closed out of opportunities with some landlords, some managers, and some community members because of my sexuality.

It's important to me that all Ohioans be able to work toward their best and brightest future regardless of their gender or sexuality; it's important to me that all members of my queer community be safe, and supported, no matter where they go in my state. I love Ohio, and many of my queer community members and I feel invested in our civic future. But without nondiscrimination protections, we are less able to care about the health and future of our communities and our state because we'll be struggling to provide for our basic necessities.

I encourage all members of my legislature to consider their LGBTQ constituents, which according to the Movement Advancement Project, averages about 4% of each of your districts. Hundreds of thousands of Ohioans are hoping you will view us as equal under the law, and deserving of fair treatment and equal opportunity. Please vote in support of the Ohio Fairness Act.

I urge you to pass Senate Bill 11, the Ohio Fairness Act.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

