

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

I am the monk-in-residence at the Center for Pragmatic Buddhism and I am in charge of the spiritual development of our community. We have around 60 members of our community, which is mixed in age, race and sexuality, all practicing and learning together. We are currently located in the Grandview area in a rented space.

My faith tradition – Buddhism – leads me strongly to support the Ohio Fairness Act as the teachings of the Buddha are themselves strongly against applying artificial discriminators - race, class, sexual status, gender status or any other - to our dealings with other people. Buddhism teaches that all people should be treated the same as all people are alike in their possession of Buddha-Nature. Even 2600 years ago, the Buddha himself ruled that there was no difference between homosexual and heterosexual behavior. He also ruled that people needed to be treated as the gender of their identification rather than being boxed into a gender by accident of birth.

As a longtime member of the LGBTQ community in Central Ohio, I fully support the Ohio Fairness Act. I have been lucky myself in being employed by fair and inclusive employers, but I have seen firsthand the effects of discrimination on many of my friends - being denied jobs because they had same-sex spouses; being asked to leave restaurants for no more untoward behavior than holding hands with their date; being denied when applying as a same-sex couple, and more.

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

Thank you for your time and consideration.