

**Before**  
**The Senate Judiciary Committee**  
**Testimony on Senate Bill 11**

**By**  
**Joshua Hartley**

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

I am a partner, son, grandson, brother, friend, advocate for equality, wedding planner and member of the LGBTQ community. I am more than my sexual orientation but that is the first and only reason that I and my siblings have been personally and professional discriminated against.

Professionally, I am a wedding planner. I've had the privilege of helping plan and execute ceremonies and receptions for more than 60 couples. In that time, I have been told by certain wedding venues across Ohio that, as the wedding planner, I am not permitted to coordinate any ceremonies (opposite- or same-sex) in their buildings because I am LGBTQ and support same-sex marriage. In addition, couples have shared with me that they have been denied access to use venues for their opposite-sex wedding because I am LGBTQ and support same-sex weddings.

Personally, I am one of 12 children in a multi-blended family: four blood siblings, four step, two half and one adopted. Of the 12 siblings, three of us are LGBTQ. As the oldest, I have been able to guide my younger siblings on information to protect themselves. However, I have not been able to protect them from housing and workplace discrimination. Both of my younger siblings who identify as LGBTQ live in rural Ohio and have had to move (both in and out of state) several times due to discrimination. In addition, they've both lost jobs due to their sexual orientation.

Ohio's state tourism slogan is "Find it here." But what you won't find here are equal protections for all people. Without those protections, we also risk losing new businesses, tourists and residents who pride themselves on being inclusive and affirming.

I hope that Ohio grows to be an inclusive and equally welcoming state for all people for generations to come. I wish for Ohio to continue to advance equality and one day set an example of equality for states across the nation. Above all, I want Ohio to be a state where my siblings can live and work where they choose without fear of discrimination.

In conclusion, all residents of Ohio should be treated equally. It's as simple as the golden rule. And everyone should have the freedom to put in an honest day's work, be judged on their merit, and provide for their family.

Senate Bill 11 will advance our ongoing progress for equality. I urge the committee to support this legislation, Senate Bill 11, the Ohio Fairness Act. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.