

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

Thank you for this opportunity to talk about why I believe LGBT persons should be a protected class in Ohio. I believe in this bill because I believe in protections for all people, and that also means protecting those who are marginalized.

It is hard for me to believe that we still live in a state where all people are not protected from discrimination. As a black woman, I know what it means to be a protected class. Having the recognition as a group of people gives me confidence and allows me to be my true self. When I don't have to hide who I am when preparing for a job interview, I can focus less on how people will think of my blackness and more about how I can work best for the company I want to work for.

As well, having the protection for the LGBT community can help myself and others feel like their true selves. From a business perspective, allowing people to be their full selves not only allows them to stop worrying about hiding, but also allows them to thrive in the workplace. As I myself have come out, I have noticed how much better I work for my company as my full self where I was overcome with anxiety about how my actions could out me.

This is the difference that affects every LGBT person. It is not that we want to offend people whose theology is against our personhood but rather that we believe as citizens of Ohio we believe we have as much of a right to live a full life as our neighbors. We are not trying to push our pride on people, but rather just trying to be a normal, complete person who is a functioning member in Ohio's society.

We already have protected people for race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, disability and age. We already have a precedent of that protection. LGBT people deserve to live as full humans in Ohio without fear of losing a job, not finding housing or not having public accommodations.

Please serve all Ohioans by supporting the Ohio Fairness Act.

Thank you again for your time,
Kelley A Fox