

Testimony in support of Senate Bill 11, The Ohio Fairness Act

Chair Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Minority Member Thomas, and the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

My name is Mary Beth Mantkowski and I am writing this letter in support of Senate Bill 11 because I morally and ethically believe that every person living in Ohio should be treated equally. All residents of our state should have legal protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity or expression. It is hard for me to comprehend that this type of discrimination is even an issue in this day and age, but sadly it is. No one should have to worry about losing their home, their job, or their rights because they are gay or transgender. No one should have to live in fear because of their sexual orientation or their gender identity or expression. Ohio needs to update the Ohio Civil Rights law to ensure that ALL Ohioans are treated equally.

Besides my strong personal opinion regarding this issue, I also know that Ohio would be best served to adopt the Fairness Act if we want to keep or attract top corporations and employees. What happened in North Carolina (which lost 2000+ jobs according to an Associated Press study) should be a firm message that businesses do not want to locate in a state that does not provide non-discrimination laws. There are currently twenty-two states that offer this protection. Ohio needs to join this group in order to attract the best and the brightest. It would be very unfortunate to lose top talent because a minority of our population doesn't believe that all people should be treated equally. It would be unfortunate to have the brightest college students choose universities in other states because we are not an all-inclusive state. Almost three quarters of Ohioans favor employment and housing laws that make it illegal to discriminate based on sexual orientation or gender identity. By voting for Senate Bill 11, you will send a message that Ohio is a state that offers opportunity, acceptance and freedom to all.

Thank you,

Mary Beth Mantkowski