

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

I am a Kansas native, born and raised with values we all believe are fundamental as people in the Midwest: an honest day's work for an honest day's pay, lend a helping hand, and treat others as you should be treated. As members of the committee, and residents of the Midwest, I know you also share these values, and are willing to work toward what is right, and I believe equality for all Ohioans is what is right. I was an Eagle Scout, and it was a lesson continuously taught to us, and something I strive to live toward every day.

Having moved to Ohio in 2017 sight unseen, I've quickly grown to love our great state and set about making it my home. I've been fortunate enough to work for employers with their own anti-discrimination policies in place, but thousands of Ohioans lack these basic protections. We cannot ensure that everyone is able to give an honest day's work if they aren't protected fairly and respected for who they are. For these reasons, I believe it is imperative to pass SB11.

Senate Bill 11 tells the rest of the country that Ohio is open for business by ensuring barriers to housing and employment and public accommodations do not exist for LGBTQ+ Ohioans and Americans seeking to move to our great state because of who they love. Imagine being fired from your job or losing the roof over your head simply because someone does not approve of who you love. As willing contributors to society and Ohio's economy, members of the LGBTQ+ community only ask to be treated with dignity, fairness, respect, and the same anti-discrimination rights we all are guaranteed. As a member of this community, when the threat of inequality is very real, and sometimes acted upon, I know that our ability to expand prosperity across this state can be stifled.

I urge members to pass SB11 as soon as possible. Ensure that all Ohioans are protected equally under the law. I thank you for your time in reading my testimony and for your consideration of SB11. I am happy to submit a follow up and answer any questions you may have.