

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

I own Greene Tool Systems Inc., a small business located in the heart of Dayton that designs and manufactures high-tech cutting tools for manufacturing in the aerospace, automotive, and power industries. We chose to relocate to the inner city of Dayton because we wanted to do business in a place where our investment would make a real difference in the community.

Our plant uses state-of-the-art multi-axis CNC machinery with robot loaders to produce close-tolerance cutting tools. Companies like SpaceX, General Motors DMAX, and other high-tech companies count on our expertise to manufacture their products. Our jobs require skilled engineers, programmers, and machine technicians.

I was surprised to learn in a discussion with my son that Ohio is missing the boat by not establishing equal rights for all of its residents. He explained that people in the LGBTQ community are fully aware of Ohio's lack of equal protections. In fact, skilled workers and some high-tech companies will not consider relocating to a state that does not have basic fully-inclusive nondiscrimination protections in place.

So, how would a bill like the Ohio Fairness Act affect the State of Ohio? I deal with large manufacturing firms all over the state and I keep hearing the same thing: "We cannot find skilled workers." Over the years, I have met and worked alongside numerous members of the LGBTQ community who are also highly educated professionals from all fields, including engineers, lawyers, and doctors.

Ohio needs skilled candidates to fill the hundreds of high-paying jobs that are available today. Ohio also needs to attract the high-tech companies that are currently refusing to give Ohio a second look because our state does not yet protect everyone equally under the law.

Now, let's look at the other side of the coin: equal rights.

Folks within the LGBTQ community are exposed to what I call conscious and unconscious discrimination. As a parent of two gay sons, I see the pain that they suffer when they are discriminated against. Even when I openly talk about my gay sons, I can sense that some people are made uncomfortable simply by mentioning their sexual orientation in conversation. My sons deal with this on a daily basis, and regularly overlook hurtful and discriminatory comments that are made about them. They claim it's not a big deal, but you have to experience this kind of discrimination to understand how it feels.

As legislators, this is your opportunity to finally protect all Ohioans – including LGBTQ Ohioans.

There is no way to measure the lost opportunities when you are not even being considered. When this bill passes into law, it will become nationwide news. Skilled workers and high-tech companies will then at least consider Ohio as a state in which to do business because it will be safe.

Although I was taught to believe that everyone in the USA is afforded equal opportunity, I now see that this is not the case for the LGBTQ community. As with other minorities, laws must be passed in order to ensure equal opportunity.

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

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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