

Chair Blessing III, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Minority Member Clyde, and the members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee:

My name is Kei Hopkins and I am writing in support of House Bill 160. I live in the greater Cleveland area and was born and raised in Ohio.

HB160 will protect LGBTQ Ohioans from discrimination in the workplace. I have experienced such discrimination firsthand and have been unable to obtain legal recourse to remedy the harm that was done to me. On one occasion, I was promptly terminated after a client referred to me as a "faggot." Even though I did not respond to her remark and continued to conduct myself appropriately, my employer chose to let me go, refusing to clarify the rationale for my firing and ignoring the questions I raised with regard to my termination.

In another work setting, I was routinely disciplined by my boss for not conforming to a strict dress code policy that was not uniformly enforced with my coworkers. Although my male and female colleagues were permitted to dress in a range of business casual attire, I was repeatedly chastised for any slight deviation from gender normative clothing. It's also worth noting that I did not work directly with the public. Ultimately, I decided to seek out employment elsewhere in the hopes of finding a more inclusive workplace.

As Ohioans, we need protections against discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations. I know too many LGBTQ people who have been harassed at work and kicked out of rental properties. It is time to afford every citizen of our state the same opportunities to succeed and contribute to society.

I urge you to consider passing HB160.