



May 22, 2019

Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee  
BRAVO Testimony on Senate Bill 11

Good morning, Chairman Eklund, Vice Chairman Manning, Ranking Minority Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. My name is Jenn Eidemiller and I work with Buckeye Region Anti Violence Organization (BRAVO), A Division of Equitas Health. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 11, The Ohio Fairness Act.

BRAVO, is an anti-violence organization that serves the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual communities of Ohio. As a Division of Equitas Health, we offer individual crisis intervention, comprehensive case management, advocacy, information referral, and ongoing support for survivors of hate and bias violence, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and stalking. Our mission is to eliminate violence on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression both within and on behalf of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ+) communities.

BRAVO is a founding member of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP), a coalition of LGBTQ+ specific anti-violence programs nation-wide that create national reports and provide resources for LGBTQ+ survivors of violence. NCAVP reports demonstrate that LGBTQ+ individuals experience discrimination, harassment and violence at alarming rates. Specifically, gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals report sexual assault at higher rates than straight individuals and one in every two transgender individuals experience sexual assault in their lifetime. Gay and lesbian individuals report equal rates of domestic violence as straight individuals within their relationships. Although, bisexual and transgender individuals report slightly higher rates of domestic violence, with unique lethality risks. Overall, LGBTQ+ communities experience disproportionate violence, especially LGBTQ+ communities of color, and are in great need of statewide protections to ensure their safety and access to vital services.

Through our work, BRAVO provides education, cultural humility training, and technical assistance to social service organizations, healthcare providers, local criminal justice systems, educational systems, and community organizations. BRAVO is known for the SafeZone program that provides training and technical assistance for Rape Crisis Centers, Domestic Violence Shelters and Ohio programs that provide direct services to survivor's violence. We assist organizations in implementing non-discrimination policies and have seen first-hand how these policies not only increase awareness regarding LGBTQ+ specific violence, but also increase safety and access for survivors seeking services. Access to services can be the difference between life and death.

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For many individuals, shelter and housing are the foundation to escape abusive relationships and survive trauma. Housing and Urban Development found that transgender and gender nonconforming people continue to experience significant violence, harassment and discrimination in attempting to access programs, benefits, services and accommodations. National research reveals that lack of access to shelter and housing for transgender and gender nonconforming people, particularly those who were homeless youths, was a pervasive problem. BRAVO knows it is possible to provide inclusive housing to LGBTQ+ survivors. Over the years we have providing training and technical assistance to successfully transition shelter and housing programs to provide safe and inclusive services to all.

From small towns, to larger cities, BRAVO believes that discrimination has no place in Ohio's laws.

We support the Ohio Fairness Act because we believe that Ohio's laws should provide protections and safety to all of our communities, especially communities most impacted by violence. We believe that all survivors are deserving and worthy of safe and inclusive services, regardless of their sexual orientation gender identity or gender expression.

We hope you will join us in our mission to make Ohio safer for all communities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to you today. I am available to answer any questions the committee may have.

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