

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

I have been ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for nearly forty years. I have served congregations in ELCA NE Ohio Synod and am now partially retired. I serve as a pastoral substitute in various ELCA congregations. From May 20 through July 20, 2019, I am serving as the Sabbatical Pastor of First English Evangelical Lutheran Church (1208 Race Street, Cincinnati OH 45202).

I support LGBTQ-inclusive nondiscrimination protections for Ohio (The Ohio Fairness Act) because all Ohioans are loved by God. God loves us first, so we love. My denomination, ELCA, is affirming of LGBTQ children of God and LGBTQ children of God, like myself, are ordained and serving many congregations.

I support LGBTQ-inclusive nondiscrimination protections for Ohio (The Ohio Fairness Act) because all Ohioans have the right to live life with the same opportunities. These include the opportunity to work and pay taxes and to stay healthy so they can work. Health includes not only access to medical care for physical health, but also access to adequate food and shelter. Health also includes freedom from the stress of being a persecuted minority.

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

Thank you for your time and consideration.