

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

I am the owner of GoodCity Concepts, LLC, a creative services and digital media production company specializing in corporate product videos and community documentary films.

I am the father of a female-to-male trans son. After my son began his social transition, I experienced workplace/employment discrimination. As a result, my employment and 30-year career came to an end. However, because I was a pastor, this discrimination was within the rights of my employer based upon the Separation of Church and State enshrined in the US Constitution. This was a profoundly difficult time, but one that has given me a new passion: To work towards equality in the workplace and in housing for all LGBTQ people.

Although, I now fiercely disagree with the doctrine of my former faith community, I defend their right to practice their faith and to be non-inclusive. However, I am committed to speaking out and advocating for my son's right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in this great state. Whereas my son may not be welcome to worship and join some churches, I believe he shouldn't be evicted or fired for who he is by businesses open to the public.

I believe that my son and all LGBTQ people in Ohio should find protection in our laws so they may be able to contribute to the good of our communities as they live where they choose and work at jobs for which they are qualified without the fear of being evicted or fired merely because of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Fair housing and employment are basic human rights for a developed nation.

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

Thank you for your time and consideration.