

Chair Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Minority Member Thomas, and the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Theodore Pavlich and I'm here today to express my support for SB 11.

I'm a fourth generation Ohio resident, a graduate of an Ohio public high school and university, and a long-time employee of a Cleveland non-profit organization. I'm a freelance theatre artist and I've chosen to live in Cleveland due to the incredible culture and public funding for the arts in Cleveland. Among other community activities, I have been involved for the last four years with Station Hope, a free-to-all annual celebration of Ohio's important role in the Underground Railroad and social justice history.

Cleveland was known as Station Hope on the Underground Railroad because it was the last stop before escaped slaves would board a boat to Canada and freedom. However, Cleveland has not been the same safe haven for me. As a transgender man, I have faced many difficulties due to the lack of discrimination protections in Ohio. I would like to take this opportunity to describe one such instance.

In September 2014, I moved into a new apartment. It was the second floor of a top-bottom duplex. The space was beautiful, affordable, and on the bus route to my university. It was everything I could have wanted. I spent that September getting settled in to my new home, working 30 hours a week, and most importantly, focusing on my classwork.

Then, on October 6th, my landlord informed me that I needed to leave. He had run a background check after I signed my lease, which revealed that I was transgender. He told me that he wanted a "family-friendly" household and transgender people did not fit that description. He told me that if I left before October 15th, he would not take any legal action, but if I stayed beyond that, he would formally evict me. With limited time and even more limited funds, I decided to just leave. I had no protection, it was totally legal for him to ask me to leave on the basis of my gender identity. Maybe I could have fought him, but I was living hand to mouth at the time and couldn't handle something else on my plate.

I couldn't find another apartment on such short notice, so I moved in with my parents in Geauga County. Just moving in the middle of the semester was extra stress and work, taking time away from my studies. I had to rent a storage unit for most of my things. I could no longer take the bus to school and work, which was free with my student ID. Instead, I needed to use a car with all the added costs. I also had to spend twice as much time commuting and couldn't use that time to study like I had on the bus.

Eventually, due to the financial and emotional strain, I had to withdraw from classes with half of the semester already completed. Numerous other repercussions resulted from my sudden homelessness, and this is just one instance of discrimination I've faced as a transgender resident of Ohio. If there were protections against anti-LGBTQ discrimination in place, I likely would not have experienced this homelessness and would have been able to stay enrolled in my classes. At the very least, I would have had legal recourse to defend myself.

I have been lucky to have support from my family and friends to keep my head above water, but not all of my LGBTQ siblings have such support. I support SB 11 so that I and my fellow LGBTQ Ohioans can live in this state without such fear and Ohio can be, once again, a station of hope for all people.

I would like to thank the committee for allowing me to speak today and I will answer any questions that members of the committee may have.