



Representative Kent Smith

Ohio House District 8

HB 404 Sponsor Testimony
Transportation and Public Safety Committee
State Representative Kent Smith, 8th District
December 13, 2022

Chairman Baldrige, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy and members of the Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you for providing myself and my cosponsor an opportunity to advocate for the passage of House Bill 404 which would create a license plate for the nonpartisan organization Equality Ohio.

First a little bit about the history of Equality Ohio. In 2005, sixty-five people, diverse in gender, race, religion, and region of Ohio, met in a Columbus church basement. After two long days, Equality Ohio was born and it's vision was and remains: to help create an Ohio that everyone can call home.

Quick Facts about Ohio's LGBTQ+ Community (from the Movement Advancement Project, 2019 & 2020): Online link here: https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality_maps/profile_state/OH

- Percent of Adults (18+) who are LGBTQ - 4.3%
- Total LGBTQ Population (13+) - 462,000
- Percent of Workforce That is LGBTQ - 5%
- Total LGBTQ Workers - 298,000
- Percent of LGBTQ Adults (25+) Raising Children - 30%

This population has been discriminated against, protested against and attacked. But it has also been responsible, valuable and heroic.

Let us learn the lesson of Psalms 118:22 which reads: "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."

Washington has learned.

On November 29, 2022, the Senate voted 61–36 to pass the Respect For marriage Act. Voting in favor of the bill were 49 Democrats and 12 Republicans including Ohio Senator Rob Portman. Following the vote, Senator Portman's office released a statement that included the following.

"This is a momentous day in the Senate and I am proud of my colleagues whose hard work made passage of this bill possible. The American people want this issue settled, and with the passage of this bill, millions of married couples will get the certainty and peace of mind they deserve by having their marriage protected."

On December 8, 2022, the House passed (258–169–1) the Senate's version of the Act, with 39 Republicans voting in favor of this legislation.

Today, December 13th at 3:30 the Respect For Marriage Act, which passed with strong bipartisan support, will be signed into law. And today, the State of Ohio should make a similar gesture by supporting this legislation that would create an Equality Ohio license plate.

So members of the Committee, I would ask that you see no stranger among your fellow 11.7 million Ohioans, that you not discard the cornerstone and I would ask you to intentionally use this legislation to help make all of us a little more brave. Thank you for your attention, we are happy to answer questions at this time.

