



Jeremy Blake
Board Member for Equality Ohio
HB 404 - Testimony in SUPPORT of License Plate for Equality Ohio

To Chairman Baldrige, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the Transportation and Public Safety Committee, my name is Jeremy Blake, and I am a proud Board Member of Equality Ohio, our statewide education and advocacy group on behalf of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer + (LGBTQ+) community in Ohio.

Equality Ohio has been working across our beautiful state since 2005 to change hearts, minds, laws, and lives. We sincerely believe that everyone can have a journey towards fully accepting and supporting their LGBTQ+ neighbors, family, community members, coworkers, and constituents.

In 2016 I served on Newark, Ohio City Council, and Equality Ohio was introduced to me as an available resource. I worked with Equality Ohio, our city Law Director and members of our city council to adopt a local nondiscrimination ordinance to protect people—including LGBTQ+ people—against discrimination. Since that initial effort, I have been a supporter of the organization.

Now, as a board member, I believe a chief responsibility of my role is to support our amazing staff from our CEO to our regional field staff. I have seen the staff at Equality Ohio involved in some incredible work, and I am truly proud of their accomplishments. Our staff have light hearted moments at various Pride festivals across our state to much more serious moments working with members of our LGBTQ+ community on life changing decisions. The staff are dedicated professionals that provide excellent services to our state.

I would gladly continue to show my support for Equality Ohio on my car by purchasing a license plate with their logo. This will not only allow me to display my support for Equality Ohio, but while I am driving on the roads and streets of our state, I would hope it might make others curious to learn more about Equality Ohio. Having this license plate as an option will add to the diverse array of license plates already available and be significant for our LGBTQ+ community.

Visibility of our LGBTQ+ community is imperative to changing hearts and minds, and this bill is a small—but meaningful—step towards increasing our visibility and acceptance in Ohio.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill.