



House Government Oversight Committee (OHR)
GovernmentOversightCommittee@ohiohouse.gov

June 3, 2024 RE: HB471 "Regards protests against primary election candidates"

Dear Chair Rep. Peterson and respected Committee Members:

We write to you in strong opposition to HB471. The requirement to publicly disclose previous names imposes an unnecessary burden on all candidates but also has the harmful and potentially dangerous consequence of forcibly outing trans individuals for no legitimate purpose. Candidates in Ohio have the right to choose what name the public knows them by, be it those changing their name for marriage, adoption, gender affirmation, safety, or personal choice. There is no public necessity to knowing candidates' previous names; there are many other current safeguards in place to ensure candidates are both who they say and reputable under the law. There is no precedent to indicate a need for this.

Imagine for a moment the courage it takes to step forward as a candidate for public office, to aspire to serve one's community, only to be met with a bureaucratic obstacle that demands disclosure of deeply personal and often painful information. This requirement not only undermines the privacy and autonomy of transgender individuals but also perpetuates stigma and discrimination against our community. There are reasonable parts of this bill, the other five parts in fact are all already factors that would legally preclude someone from running for office in Ohio. But names are an important part of identity, and candidates do not owe the public 100% transparency into their private lives, forcing them to post old names regardless of the reason is unnecessary.

HB471 goes against existing legal procedures and safeguards against potential misuse of personal information. These existing policies not only protect trans candidates from unwarranted scrutiny but also upholds the integrity of our electoral system. This bill seeks to fix a problem that doesn't exist while creating new problems.

This year was not the first time that a transgender person has run for office in our state, and it surely will not be the last. HB471 will not stop trans people from being part of Ohio, in our communities, it will not stop trans people from running for office.

This is not just a matter of legal technicality; it is a matter of justice and equality. By supporting this bill, you send a message that Ohio does not value the rights and dignity of all its citizens, regardless of gender identity. TransOhio supports Ohio's transgender and ally community by providing services, education, aid, and advocacy; we know first hand the harm this bill will do. We urge you to stand on the right side of history, to uphold the principles of fairness and inclusivity that lie at the heart of our democracy, and to swiftly stop the advancement of HB471.

Respectfully,

TransOhio Board of Directors
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