

Committees

Transportation, Commerce & Workforce, Ranking
Health, Human Services & Medicaid, Ranking
Finance
Finance Subcommittee on Health & Medicaid
Ways & Means
Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee

23rd District

Antonio@ohiosenate.gov
(614) 466-5123
(614) 719-3913 (fax)



State Senator Nickie J. Antonio District 23

Senate Judiciary Committee
March 13, 2019
Sponsor Testimony SB 11

Good morning, Chair Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 11, The Ohio Fairness Act.

The Fairness Act is a simple bill that updates the Ohio Civil Rights law by adding Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity to those already protected in housing, employment and the public sphere. It also upholds all existing religious exemptions under the Ohio Civil Rights Law. It is a fair proposal that will simply give people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender the same freedom to work, the same freedom to live where they choose, and the same full equal participation in society, just as anyone else in Ohio. It has been over 50 years since we have updated the Civil Rights Act. And for the estimated 400,000 LGBT Ohioans, fairness is long overdue.

Ohio is one of 28 states that do not have clear non-discrimination protections for members of the LGBTQ community. However, 21 cities and 2 counties (Cuyahoga and Summit) have passed ordinances.

Today in our state a same-sex couple could be married on a Saturday, post their wedding photos on Sunday, and be fired from their job or evicted from their apartment on Monday—based solely on who they are and whom they love. This is not compatible with the values of fairness that Ohioans hold dear.

It is important to note that on his first night as the newly elected Governor, Mike DeWine signed an executive order outlining an anti-discrimination policy for state government employees by adding sexual orientation and gender identity or expression to protected classes. The governor has made protections for LGBT Ohioans a priority explaining that it will help attract and maintain the best employees.¹

More than 500 businesses have joined Ohio Business Competes, a nonpartisan coalition of Ohio businesses that support nondiscrimination policies that are inclusive of LGBTQ Ohioans.² In 2018 alone, its membership more than tripled. Some of these business leaders include Procter & Gamble Company, OhioHealth, AEP (American Electric Power), KeyBank, General Electric, United Way, Huntington, and AT&T. Noteworthy, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce and the Ohio Manufacturing Association supported this pro-business non-discrimination legislation in the 132nd General Assembly with the Ohio Chamber of Commerce offering proponent testimony in committee. They continue to support this effort today.

Twenty-two of America's fifty states currently protect people from discrimination based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Without nondiscrimination policies in place Ohio falls behind other states when hiring the best and brightest professional talent and recruiting companies to move to our state.

Businesses are watching Ohio and are subsequently investing in states that encourage inclusivity and a healthy workforce. North Carolina lost 2000+ jobs, and according to an Associated Press study, the state will lose an estimated \$3.76 billion over the next 12 years due to LGBT discriminatory laws.³ On the other hand, Facebook invested \$1 billion in a new data center in Fort Worth, TX citing the city's LGBT non-discrimination laws as a factor that influenced their decision.⁴

No one should be denied access to a home and all that comes with that responsibility, no Ohioans should live in fear of losing their job, or be denied the right to pursue a career to be a contributing member of society. All citizens should enjoy the ability to participate in one's own community without discrimination.

When we say the words of our pledge of allegiance, we say "with liberty and justice for all"--not some, but "for all". These civil rights assurances are the essential building blocks of our American dream and Ohio has the opportunity through this proposed

¹ <http://www.hannah.com/DesktopDefaultPublic.aspx?type=hns&id=mfnHrmODBQo%3d&u=MtvLsMddBIU%3d>

² <https://ohiobusinesscompetes.org/members/>

³ <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/03/27/521676772/ap-calculates-north-carolinas-bathroom-bill-will-cost-more-than-3-7-billion>

⁴ <https://ohiobusinesscompetes.org/economiccase/>

legislation to provide equal treatment for all of Ohio's citizens to live, work, learn and thrive in our state. With the Ohio Fairness Act, we can send a message that Ohio is open to all for business in the 21st century.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have at this time.