



Representative Emilia Strong Sykes
Minority Leader

September 27, 2019

Speaker Larry Householder
Ohio House of Representatives
77 S. High Street, 14th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Speaker Householder:

I write to you today to express my disappointment and concern that my September 5 recommended edits to the House Administrative Reference Guide that would protect our LGBTQ+ members and staff from discrimination were not included in the final version that was circulated by email this morning. As you know, we have several LGBTQ+ staffers and this employment policy fails to protect not only them, but also anyone else who may aspire to work for the Ohio Legislature in the future. I can imagine some staff who, after receiving the email, would be worried and wonder if they are safe from discrimination, retaliation or termination simply for being who they are.

You'll remember when Governor DeWine took office, one of his first actions was to sign an executive order that included sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes of state employees. When given a draft of the House Administrative Reference Guide that did not include this, I thought it was simply an oversight. I inquired as to whether or not the governor's EO still covered LGBTQ+ legislative staff as state employees if our handbook omitted them as a protected class. Chief Administrative Officer Kim Hartman informed my chief of staff that the governor's executive order does not extend to legislative staff. That is why I suggested the anti-discrimination language be inserted into our newly updated House Administrative Reference Guide to be consistent with other state offices. I was informed you had denied my request, but was hopeful you would change your mind before releasing the final version. Sadly, it doesn't appear you have.

More than 500,000 LGBTQ+ people call Ohio home, and more than two dozen communities across the state have issued ordinances protecting citizens from discrimination based on their sexual orientations or gender identities. The City of Columbus is one of these communities and our legislative offices are geographically located within its jurisdiction. However, the public servants who work for us, many of whom pay Columbus taxes, could be fired at any time, any

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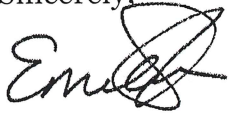
day. In the year 2019, when marriage equality has been legal for several years, this is backwards and wrong.

Expanding this patchwork of protections statewide would strengthen our economy by attracting top talent, retaining the best and brightest, and encouraging business investment in the Buckeye State. Denying LGBTQ+ House employees equal protections harms our employees and sends the wrong signal to the rest of the world—that we aren't an inclusive state, that we don't want to compete for jobs, businesses and investment, and that we do not want to see inclusive non-discrimination policies become part of state law.

I encourage you to join the dozens of communities, hundreds of leading businesses, millions of Ohioans, the Ohio Senate and our Republican governor in supporting statewide non-discrimination policies that restore our promise of opportunity for all Ohioans—regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

I look forward to hearing from you soon on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Emilia Strong Sykes
House Minority Leader
Ohio House District 34