

**Senate Bill 305
Proponent Testimony
Senate Judiciary -- Civil Justice Committee
Wednesday, May 13, 2008**

***Jason Lansdale
Cleveland Clinic***

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today in support of Senate Bill 305. My name is Jason Lansdale and I am here today representing my employer, Cleveland Clinic, where I work as a member of the market development staff.

Founded in 1921, Cleveland Clinic employs over 37,000 employees, making us the second largest employer in the state. *US News & World Report* consistently names Cleveland Clinic one of the nation's best hospitals, including the nation's #1 heart center, in its annual "America's Best Hospitals" survey.

The mission of The Cleveland Clinic is to provide compassionate health care of the highest quality in a setting of education and research. To carry out this mission and foster the group practice of medicine, the Clinic must excel in specialized medical care supported by comprehensive research and education. In addition, we must be able to attract the best qualified medical, scientific, and support staff.

In 2006 alone, Cleveland Clinic facilities had over 3 million patient visits and more than 53,000 individuals were admitted for care. Our human resources staff constantly updates and refreshes training for everyone on responding to the needs of our diverse patient population. Central to the success of providing high quality patient care is the ability to fairly respond to unique individual needs.

Senate Bill 305 would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Cleveland Clinic is one of the many companies and organizations across Ohio that already prohibits discrimination against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation. They do so because we believe it is the right thing to do -- as an employer, economic development catalyst, and a major health care provider.

As a biomedical research powerhouse, our institution manages more than \$213 million in research funding every year, making it an even more significant economic force in northern Ohio and beyond. Our ability to tap these kinds of investments depends, in large part, on our capacity to entice national and international researchers and scholars to join our work. It is critical that these talented people see Cleveland Clinic as a part of a work environment that respects and protects the rights of all employees.

Cleveland Clinic must also have the necessary tools to attract a diverse, talented workforce. The Clinic aspires to be an organization that attracts, retains and promotes its best and brightest equitably. And, they demonstrate this commitment in a variety of ways, such as hiring nationally recognized diversity trainers to coach employees and professional staff and creating a number of employee advisory groups, including one representing gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees. Additionally they illustrate their support by publicly supporting legislation like SB 305.

While here, I would also like to share experiences as an individual that I'm familiar with as a lifelong Ohioan who was born and raised in Dayton. I've lived in Cincinnati, Columbus, and now I live in Cleveland so I'm been a part of Ohio's workforce in many of the major urban areas in our state. I personally know of individuals who have been treated unfairly in employment and housing matters simply because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. I also know people who have been denied housing, office space, and employment.

I have also seen Ohio lose talented individuals to other states; individuals who have went to other states where they know they will be treated fairly under the law. Passing Senate Bill 305 would help address this problem.

So in short, upholding the basic rights and principles of all individuals, as symbolized by SB 305, makes great sense to Cleveland Clinic as a provider, research center and major Ohio employer. Therefore, we support this legislation. Thank you for your consideration and I'm happy to answer any questions.