



Improving Oberlin's Discrimination Protections

Human Relations Commission

Goals:

Make nondiscrimination ordinances clear, consistent, and comprehensive

Make procedures for handling complaints clear and consistent

- Resolve complaints informally whenever possible

Increase community awareness of ordinances and procedures

Background:

Detailed analysis of Oberlin ordinances by Equality Ohio

Reviewed ordinances and procedures at selected Ohio cities

Meetings with the Law Director

Conversations with business owners, local ministers, and members of Oberlin's LGBTQ community

Current status of nondiscrimination ordinances and procedures:

Inconsistent, out-of date language and terminology

Protected groups inconsistent

Protections available in state law not consistently mentioned

No protections in areas where Oberlin could provide protections

Inconsistent procedures

Main substantive ordinance change:

Add protections for sexual orientation and gender identity in the areas of public accommodations, private employment, and discriminatory intimidation

- No such protections in Ohio law and few protections in Federal law
- 18 Ohio cities have comprehensive nondiscrimination protections

The Commission recommends that City Council establish a process for revising the City's nondiscrimination ordinances and procedures that would:

1. Update non-discrimination sections of the code to make language more consistent and in accord with currently accepted terminology
2. Revise the protected categories in existing relevant code sections so that they are consistent and comprehensive

3. Extend non-discrimination protections for all categories to the areas of public accommodations and private employment

4. Establish appropriate misdemeanor levels for non-discrimination protections that apply only to Oberlin's ordinances, but not to State law

5. Provide consistent procedures that designate the Human Relations Commission as the suggested first step for attempted resolution of discrimination complaints prior to any legal course of action

Process moving forward (if Council agrees with recommendations):

Human Relations Commission happy to work with the Law Director in developing draft ordinance and procedural revisions for Council consideration

Revisions can be kept relatively simple by relying on work of other cities

We look forward to hearing the Council's decision about next steps

HRC Members:

Ray English, co-chair
Jaqui Willis, Co-chair
Arlene Dunn
Elizabeth Meadows
Dominique Michal

RE 05/10/17