

If not now, when?

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We all know that Ohio is in economic trouble. We have been struggling to keep our bright, young adults here after graduation. Our elected officials are working overtime to keep jobs in this area and to attract new companies to make this their base of operation. Akron's mayor and our Summit County executive have made economic development a top priority.

One key to achieving these goals is to pass the Equal Housing and Employment Act (EHEA), which was introduced last week in both the Ohio House and Senate. This bill would ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Polls indicate that young professionals favor locating in cities that are welcoming to diversity. Many successful corporations have adopted nondiscrimination policies, knowing they must do this to attract the best of the new talent. These companies are looking for locations that support those policies.

In addition, the electorate in Ohio and nationally has indicated that it is ready for such legislation, with 66 percent of Ohioans saying that they would support a ban on housing and employment discrimination.

At present, 20 states and the District of Columbia ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Fifteen Ohio cities also support this. The sad truth is that with those 15 Ohio cities, only one-fifth of the population is protected.

Now we in Akron and Ohio have the chance to provide that same protection to the other four-fifths.

Let's help end this senseless discrimination. Let's help Ohio rise to its former economic greatness. Let's be part of the solution by calling our legislators to voice our support for the Equal Housing and Employment Act.

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