



## Notice for media release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Dayton Area Chamber endorses proposed legislation that would encourage workplace diversity & inclusion**

DAYTON, Ohio – The Dayton Area Chamber has announced its support of three bills that have been introduced in the Ohio House of Representatives. They are: House Bill 160, “The Ohio Fairness Act”, House Bill 492 “Women’s Business Enterprise” and “MBE and EDGE Reciprocal Agreements”. These bills encourage employers to champion diversity and inclusion in the workplace, an issue that is central to the chamber’s core values.

Each of these bills bring a progressive tone to the state of Ohio, which is what businesses look for when deciding where to invest. History has shown us how legislation can trigger enormous economic development losses. For example, according to its non-profit tourism organization, the city of Indianapolis alone lost approximately \$60 million when then-governor Mike Pence signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) into law in 2015. RFRA states that the government can’t “substantially burden a person’s exercise of religion”. However, concerns over people using the law to discriminate caused up to 12 conventions to pull out of the city, and several businesses chose not to invest there.

“We know the importance of workplace and supplier diversity and inclusion. These issues have been key to the work we do at the chamber, and are front and center in our core values,” said Chris Kershner, executive vice president, Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce. “When we’re recruiting investors and businesses leaders from outside our state, these are the laws they want to see in place. They want to know they’re looking at a state that understands the importance of these issues too.”

The Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce directly supports diversity in the workplace through programs such as the Minority Business Partnership, the Executive Women’s Leadership Council and others. The chamber also recognizes excellence in diversity and inclusion through the Premier Health Workplace Diversity Award. The 2018 winner will be announced at the chamber’s annual meeting on April 24, 2018.

“The proposed changes these bills would bring fall in line with our mission – to ensure that all employees are given the opportunity to flourish as professionals. We know this is vital to business success here in the Dayton region, and state-wide,” Kershner said.

**HB 160 “The Ohio Fairness Act”:** This bill would change Ohio’s anti-discrimination laws to include sexual orientation, gender identity and gender protection as protected classes. This bill has been endorsed by the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, and Dayton Area Chamber members Taft/, AT&T, KeyBank, Huntington Bank and Thompson Hine.

**HB 492 “Women’s Business Enterprise”:** This bill creates a Woman Owned Business (WBE) certification at the state level, and establishes woman-owned business procurement goals for state agencies.

**HB 493 “MBE and EDGE Reciprocal Agreements”:** This bill authorizes the state of Ohio to enter into MBE and EDGE certification reciprocal agreements with other states. Without these agreements, businesses with Ohio-issued MBE and EDGE certifications are not recognized in other states, forcing companies with these certifications to also secure certifications in the state in which they’d like to do business.

**About Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce**

*The Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce brings together more than 2,400 businesses and organizations in a 9 county area surrounding Dayton, Ohio. The Chamber strives to improve the region’s business climate and overall standard of living through public policy advocacy, economic development initiatives and providing networking and training opportunities for its members. Information about the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce is available at [www.daytonchamber.org](http://www.daytonchamber.org) or 937-226-1444.*

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