



Sample Script:

Date

The Honorable _____

Office Address

United States House of Representatives/United State Senate

City, State, Zip

Dear Representative/Senator _____:

[Brief intro - *as an Ohioan, as a teacher, as a community member, etc.*] I am contacting you today to urge you to support social safety net programs such as those offered by Kaleidoscope Youth Center (KYC.) Established in 1994, KYC is the largest and longest standing organization in Ohio to serve and support LGBTQIA+ youth and young adults with Drop-In Center programming, community education, case management, housing opportunities, and supportive services at *no cost* to the young people served.

LGBTQIA+ young people are disproportionately more likely to be homeless, and in many cases, this is due to parental rejection or other trauma. This lack of connection to affirming and culturally responsive care often lends to young people not having their basic needs met; with the potential for this reality to lead them into crisis situations of untreated mental and physical health concerns, ongoing poverty, and living "on the land" or in unsafe condition due to homelessness/insecure housing.

Additionally, we know:

- LGBTQIA+ youth are 120% more likely to be homeless than their peers.
- Nationally, LGBTQIA+ represent approximately 40% of the entire homeless youth population.
- In Columbus and Franklin County, an estimated 2,640 LGBTQIA+ youth are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- LGBTQIA+ youth often avoid seeking health care and other services due to fear of discrimination, and even once in care, may fear disclosure of their sexual orientation or gender identity and therefore withhold truthful responses from their providers (Center for American Progress, 2019.)

- Transgender youth face the added burden of locating providers with sufficient knowledge, competence, and experience to affirm their gender identity (Center for American Progress, 2019.)
- Additional risks include increased reports of depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, substance use, and self-destructive and suicidal behaviors.

In 2019, KYC launched case management and housing programs to serve and support LGBTQIA+ transition-aged (16-24) youth and young adults. As some of the most vulnerable young people in our community, LGBTQIA+ youth report not fully benefiting from traditional youth programs as it is difficult for them to feel safe and affirmed in those spaces. KYC combines best practice standards in youth programming with those designed to increase protective factors that LGBTQIA+ youth often lack; and access to affirming resources, referrals, and crisis intervention. Although multiple other youth-serving programs exist in Columbus, there are presently *no other programs or projects solely dedicated to serving the specific needs and experiences of young people in the LGBTQIA+ community.*

Please consider establishing or supporting legislation that ensures increased and sustainable funding to support safe housing opportunities, and support services for LGBTQIA+ in the state of Ohio.

[At any time you may use your own thoughts to personalize the letter and discuss why this issue is important to you.]

Thank you for your consideration and support of Ohio's LGBTQIA+ youth and community; please visit www.kycoho.org for additional information.

Sincerely,
Your Name
Your Pronouns
Your Title
Your Address
Your City, State, Zip Code
Your Phone Number