



Oct. 16, 2021

Subject: State conference business in light of Ohio's new anti-LGBTQ+ health care provision

Dear Governor DeWine, Ohio General Assembly,

We are writing as the Presidents of the Society for the Study of Evolution, the Society of Systematic Biologists, and the American Society of Naturalists, three nationwide organizations of professional and student biologists with over 5,000 members collectively. Together, we hold an annual five-day scientific conference that attracts between 1,600 and 2,500 attendees each year. Most recently, we have met in Providence, RI, Portland, OR, and Austin, TX. It was estimated that our conference in Providence generated \$3.6 million in direct and indirect revenue for the local economy (Providence Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau event report).

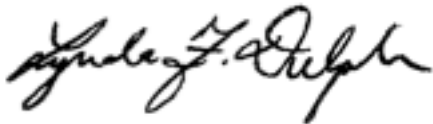
We are currently scheduled to host our 2022 meeting in Cleveland, OH, with a return visit for a second conference in the summer of 2026. In choosing venues for our meeting, we avoid states with laws that discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. We are therefore very disappointed to learn that Ohio has recently passed a law allowing doctors to deny LGBTQ+ individuals health care on "moral grounds". We regret to inform you that, with this law in place, Ohio will no longer be considered by our societies for future meetings.

In addition to making Ohio ineligible for consideration for future conferences, this law is likely to reduce attendance at our meeting as our LGBTQ+ members may not feel safe visiting if they may be denied healthcare, and many of our members will not want to support such a discriminatory law. Additionally, roughly 10% of our members work in research institutions in California, where Assembly Bill 1887 prohibits approval of state-funded or state-sponsored travel to any state that has "enacted a law that (1) has the effect of voiding or repealing existing state or local protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression; (2) authorizes or requires discrimination against same-sex

couples or their families or on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression; or (3) creates an exemption to anti-discrimination laws in order to permit discrimination against same-sex couples or their families or on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.” Ohio’s recent law has resulted in it being added to California’s travel ban list, meaning our members from CA cannot attend.

We hope you will reconsider this discriminatory law, and will acknowledge the rights of all Ohio residents in your future decision-making.

Sincerely,



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