



**Testimony of  
Amy Nelson, Executive Director  
Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana  
on SB 439  
Senate Corrections & Criminal Law – February 7, 2017**

Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee, my name is Amy Nelson and I am the Executive Director of the Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana (FHCCI). The FHCCI is a nonprofit organization working to promote fair housing and address incidents of housing discrimination.

The FHCCI supports passage of SB 439. Indiana is one of only five states which does not have a bias motivated crime law (hate crime law).

Hate crimes have an impact that lingers far beyond any specific victim. Hate crimes devastate neighborhoods, communities, and cities. They are committed to instill fear and to divide us. A burning cross placed in the yard of an African American family tells African Americans that persons of color are not welcome there. Such crimes instill fear, suspicion, and distrust. Although any crime is important to be addressed, hate crimes, by their nature, are attacks upon groups of persons. They are motivated by what makes each of us unique. They are meant to make those targeted feel inferior, in danger, and unwanted.

Hate crime laws do not impact free speech. For a crime to be considered a hate crime, there must be injury to a person or their property. Hate crime laws tell society at large that we will not allow hate based offenses, and we will not allow our community to be divided.

The Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana urges your support of SB 439.