



February 1, 2017

Dear Members of the Ohio House of Representatives Community and Family Advancement Committee;

Thank you for the opportunity to affirm my support for the Ohio Pastor Protection Act.

My Bible tells me that my speech should always be with grace, seasoned with salt. Sometimes that is difficult. There are times when our passion overwhelms our compassion. This is especially true when we feel threatened, intimidated and persecuted for our faith. Even in these times, the Lord teaches us to bless those who curse us and to pray for those who spitefully use us. I ask God to grant me the grace to follow His admonition today.

I confess to you that it is difficult to do when you are so maligned by the opposition, by politicians elected to represent you, by the media and sometimes even by those who profess to be members of the clergy. We have been vilified as having some sort of phobia and accused of discrimination and hate simply because our consciences do not permit us to engage in events or activities that promote a behavior contrary to the Scriptures.

Let me be very clear and plain. We do not object to people, a people group or the intrinsic, immutable identity of any individual. We hate no one. However, our God guided conscience does discriminate against certain behaviors and events that celebrate that behavior. It is unfortunate, irresponsible and unconstitutional to classify specific sexual behaviors as an identity equal or superior to the immutable and unchanging attributes of ethnicity or race. It is an insult to the legacy of revered men like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr who stated, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

We understand that there are groups of individuals whose consciences do not share our values. They have that liberty. My goal is not to force my views upon them. However, I reject any notion that suggests that they have the right to force their conscience on me, to discriminate against me, my congregation or any American whose conscience does not conform to theirs. They do not have the right to compel another American citizen to participate in any activity that celebrates a behavior contrary to their conscience.

I have read in the accounts of the opposition that this bill is unnecessary because pastors are already protected by the United States Constitution and Article One; Section seven of the Ohio Constitution. While I am happy that they recognize this, I feel confident that their position will change over time. In my initial assessment of this legislation, I will admit that I agreed with them. But I promised to pray about it and consider it. Then I asked a few simple questions.

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I next considered that this constitutional protection exists not just for pastors or “religious professionals.” Religious freedom is not limited to houses of worship. It belongs to every citizen. It is also true for bakers, photographers, florists and indeed every American. But they have still suffered from intimidation and unconstitutional discrimination across the nation. For some, these parchment barriers were insufficient protection.

Furthermore, if our rights are already protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, why did they need to be reiterated in the Ohio Constitution? I recalled that the First Amendment to the United States Constitution is really a reaffirmation of the Declaration of Independence which declares that we have certain inalienable rights, which are endowed to us by our Creator, the laws of nature and Nature’s God. So then, we discover that the Declaration of Independence was simply a reaffirmation of God’s law.

God’s law teaches us the freedom of conscience stating “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God,” in Romans 14:12 and also in verse five, “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”

**So, the Ohio House of Representatives will find themselves in very good company by following a long line of tradition in affirming the rights of conscience when they pass the Ohio Pastor Protection Act.**

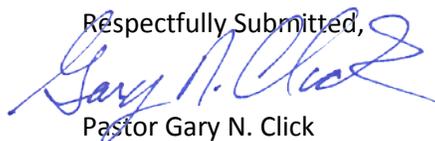
The other objection that I discovered is that somehow by affirming the rights of conscience, you are targeting and discriminating against the LGBT community, even though the legislation makes no mention of same sex marriages. In reality, the only way the Ohio Pastors Protection Act harms the proponents of same sex marriage is if they actually intend to extend their assault against personal conscience to pastors, churches and religious institutions. It is unreasonable to believe that they would spend their limited time and resources to galvanize opposition simply because they got their feelings hurt. If anything tells me that they intend to further target the faith community, it is their strenuous opposition to this bill.

Furthermore, I am shocked that they would have the gall and audacity to make such a statement after they have already intentionally targeted so many wonderful Christians. Christian photographers, florists, bakers and others have been victims of persecution and discrimination by LGBT activists, judges and state officials simply because they followed their conscience. They have not discriminated against people but rather activities. In every case, homosexual people have been served consistently but Christians have declined to participate in a marriage process that affirms homosexual activity.

Quite frankly, I and many pastors have declined to participate in many wedding ceremonies for multiple reasons. But it is not the heterosexuals that sue us, discriminate against us and enlist the government to promote their lifestyle at the expense of others. They simply and respectfully find someone else who will meet their needs.

Finally, if same sex marriage advocates want to be treated with respect and dignity they should begin to act with respect and dignity. Until the LGBT proponents can learn the difference between intimidating and advocating for their cause, I would urge the Ohio House of Representatives to pass any and all legislation possible to affirm Article 1; Section Seven of the Ohio Constitution and the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, including but not limited to the Ohio Pastors Protection Act.

Respectfully Submitted,



Pastor Gary N. Click