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Ohio House of Representatives  
Community and Family Advancement Committee

Proponent Letter on H.B. 36

Representatives and Committee Members:

I am not a pastor or a legal expert, but a concerned and informed citizen who is active in my church and faith community in northeast Ohio. I am proud to say that my faith is the most important aspect of my life and is my guide and shield in every way. As such, I believe that kindness and humility are to be foremost in all interactions. But it is also necessary to voice concerns where I feel there is a threat to the liberty that has characterized America since her inception. When Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, he made it abundantly clear that the sole purpose of government is to secure the God-given rights of the people. There is no more sacred right than deeply held religious beliefs. In this case, I am specifically addressing the belief that marriage is between a man and a woman.

The Supreme Court of the United States, in a 5-4 decision on June 26, 2016, handed down a ruling that legalized same-sex marriage and overruled existing laws in Ohio and other states. That this ruling is controversial was well documented in the dissenting opinions expressed in the wake of that decision, however it stands as law today and we must look with precision at the inevitable consequences to Ohio pastors, churches, and religious organizations.

We have seen prosecutions across America when individuals engaged in small business have chosen to withhold participation in ceremonies or celebrations of marriages which are prohibited by their religious convictions. It seems that activist groups who advocate for homosexual unions are, in some instances, unwilling to accept or abide by the rights of others to hold to their religious beliefs. This activism will undoubtedly be extended to pastors, churches, and religious organizations who will be asked to perform, celebrate, or sanction same-sex marriages. This is a sad reality in our nation that will ultimately lead to undesired and financially devastating legal challenges.

It is necessary for Ohio to take decisive and immediate action to protect pastors, churches, and religious organizations. The Ohio Pastor Protection Act, H.B. 36, is well written and succinctly accomplishes the needed protection. I would ask the honorable members of the Ohio House of Representatives to support and pass The Ohio Pastor Protection Act, H.B. 36.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views for consideration.

Sincerely,



Kathy L. Johnson