



# Calvary<sup>Bible Baptist</sup> Church

Leading People to Connect and Commit to Jesus.

February 20, 2017

Mr. Chris Long  
Ohio Christian Alliance  
P.O. Box 3076  
Akron, OH 44309

Mr. Long,

I am writing today to express my support for H.B. 36, commonly known as the "Ohio Pastor Protection Act."

In 1801, the Danbury Baptist Association of Connecticut penned a letter to Thomas Jefferson, the newly elected president of the United States. This letter asked Mr. Jefferson to clarify his position and the position of the government on the issue of religious freedom. The belief of the Danbury Baptists' was "that no man ought to suffer in name, person, or effects on account of his religious opinions." Mr. Jefferson agreed with the position of the Danbury Baptist Association, writing in response: "Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church and State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights".

The concern expressed by the members of the Danbury Baptist Association more than two-hundred years ago is a concern shared among pastors and people of faith throughout the state of Ohio today. Like Jefferson, we believe that the "wall of separation between church and state" was designed to prevent the government from interfering with the free expression of religious faith and opinions. The Bill under consideration was crafted in response to the views of non-originalist judges who have sought to enforce their social preferences on the church, thus forcing people of faith to violate their conscience. Furthermore, religious peoples have also suffered persecution, or the threat of abuse, for refusing to comply with the opinions of jurists and parties who demand that their opinions are exclusively accepted.

While I believe the words of the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment to the Constitution should be sufficient to protect churches, ministers, and people of faith from the onslaught of those who seek to force religious persons to acquiesce to their demands, I have also seen those protections fall at the hands of those who seek to re-interpret the words and intent of the Constitution. Therefore, I believe it is time to codify specific protections that will enable the continuation of the free exercise of faith in the state of Ohio. For this reason, I offer my support for H.B. 36.

Respectfully,

Rev. Matt Keller  
Lead Pastor