

I am Reverend Matthew Lee, the Associate Pastor of four Catholic churches in Champaign County.

The Ohio Pastor Protection Act is a necessary measure in our present society. While there are laws in place that *prima facie* protect the rights of all citizens, it is clear from recent events that such protections are not equally applied. Examples include the latest attempt from Equality Ohio to subvert the rights of those who engage in religious activities, with the stated goal of initiating crippling lawsuits. The true goal is to destroy any entity that would stand for God-inspired values, and most especially the Church.

The agenda is not about equality of rights or treatment, rather it is about destroying the last bastion of morality in society. It is possible under current law for a civil action to bankrupt a church, which would force that church to close. That is what is really going on, and that is why the Ohio Pastor Protection Act is necessary.

This General Assembly has a duty under Article I, paragraph 7 of the Constitution of the State of Ohio, “to pass suitable laws to protect every religious denomination in the peaceable enjoyment of its own mode of public worship,” the very Constitution which every member is sworn to uphold. I strongly encourage this General Assembly to uphold that duty, and support the Ohio Pastor Protection Act.

Thank you for your time.