



February 16, 2017

Dear Representative Vitale,

Thank you for the opportunity to let my voice be heard through this brief letter of forthright support of HB 36, the Pastor Protection Act. My name is John McCaw, Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church of Medina, OH. Our church has been a prominent presence and influence in Medina for nearly 184 years, since established in August, 1833. It is one of the longest standing organizations of any kind in our area. Today, we are as strong as ever in our community, making a positive difference in hundreds of lives each week. Our congregation, led by many faithful pastors over the years, has benefitted from the independence and freedoms that the great State of Ohio and our great Nation has provided. We are thankful for 184 years of non-interference from outside threats or laws that might impose restrictions and bias into the beliefs and practices we hold so dearly. Solemnizing marriages is one of the many ways I, and our church, are making a very positive impact within our community and world.

The U.S. Supreme Court's split decision to legalize same-sex marriage has jeopardized the firmly held religious practices and beliefs of our church, and countless others. Unfortunately, for the first time in 184 years of our church's ministry, our Pastors, and our Church now stand unprotected and at risk on the basis of our religious beliefs and practices. The legalization of same-sex marriage was an attempt to provide benefits to some, but it has effectively removed religious liberty from us. It would be tragic for a Pastor or religious organization to be subject to penalty for merely maintaining and practicing its once-protected, but still sacred and longstanding religious beliefs. This tragedy will occur if protection for Pastors and churches is not enacted.

I believe the HB 36 Pastor Protection Act would provide effective religious liberty protection for myself, our Pastors, and our church. I am in full support of HB 36 and strongly urge its soon passage. It is a very important responsibility to uphold and defend religious liberty for the sake of Pastors and churches that are making a profoundly positive difference in our local communities and world. Please pass HB 36.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pastor John McCaw". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being particularly prominent.

John McCaw
Senior Pastor