



The Honorable Timothy Ginter
77 S. High Street
Columbus, OH 43215

Chairman Ginter, Vice Chair Conditt and Ranking Member Boyd,

My name is Richard Powers and for the past forty-one years I have been the Senior Pastor of the Grace Baptist Church of Brunswick, Ohio and a proud resident of the great state of Ohio since 1967. I want to thank you for affording me the opportunity to express my concerns today as well as my support of the Pastor Protection Act that is before this committee for your consideration.

Without consulting my weddings file I cannot possibly remember how many weddings I have led over the past four decades of my ministry life. It has been a joy to consult and to counsel countless couples as "the two have become one" in the sight of God. I have always taken very seriously the role I am called to play as the spiritual director of a couple who wish to come to the altar of God's house and repeat sacred vows and promises made to God. The creation of a home and a family is by my Biblical conviction the very first institution that God established for the good and the continuance of the human family. Marriage is thereby defined by God not only by example in the book of Genesis as God brought together one man and one woman and told them to "be fruitful and to multiply and to fill the earth" but has also been defined by Jesus Himself in the Gospel of Mark chapter ten and verses six, seven and eight where we read these words of our Lord, "But from the beginning of the creation god made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh..."

My sincerely held faith in the divine inspiration of Scripture is what leads me to my conviction that the only and true definition for marriage is the intimate union of one man and one woman bound together in a covenant relationship. Jesus went on to say in Mark's Gospel chapter ten and verse nine, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." In direct disobedience to this command our nation's highest court has "put asunder" the institution of marriage. While I am not opposed to the freedom of any two individuals to make a civil union between them, it is not the allowance of civil unions that has ever been the goal of the L.G.B.T. community. The goal has always been the redefining of the word marriage and the forced compliance of same sex unions being recognized as a marriage. Every society of people throughout history has defined marriage by using the Biblical model of one man and one woman bound together in some form of a covenant relationship.

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Dr. Richard Powers, Senior Pastor

I do also believe that the primary method of forced compliance to the acceptance of same sex marriage is to use the courts as a form of punishment against those who hold convictional beliefs that disallow them to serve a couple of the same sex seeking a wedding service. This method has already been demonstrated as a method of forcing an agenda against florists, bakers, printers and photographers who have been faced with the prospect of paying high fines and in some cases to close their businesses if they are unwilling set aside their own sincerely held religious and Biblical convictions in order to bow to the dictates of the court. This is in simple terms, forced compliance! We are not naïve and know full well that it is only a matter of time until these same methods are brought against wedding ministries, houses of worship and my brothers and sisters in ministry who lead religious services of Christian marriage.

I have read the opinions of many of the opponents to this bill who seem fond of saying that this legislation is unnecessary and redundant. I don't believe that to be true and at best redundancy is not a very good argument when stating the case of opposition. If it is indeed just a repeat of rights already assured then why would anyone oppose what you are seeking to do? I do believe this legislation provides a layer of protection if not for the minister himself or herself but especially for the ministry and ministry assets. While I may be able to exercise my individual, constitutional rights of refusal to participate personally in a same sex marriage service I fear the same may not be said for the church I serve. I do believe that churches as entities are being marked for litigation and many even if they ultimately win their case will not be able to survive the cost of their own defense.

The Grace Baptist Church has purchased our insurance for more than thirty years from Brotherhood Mutual which is one of the nation's largest providers of ministry insurance policies. In the last few years our insurance provider has created a new area of coverage known as, "Religious Freedom Protection Coverage." We have learned that our church's general liability policy would not provide for coverage in such lawsuits because there is no personal bodily injury nor damage to personal property. It is evident that Brotherhood Mutual and other church and ministry based insurance providers does believe that the risk is real and the probability high that churches will in the near future face litigation over the subject of wedding policies and thereby have expressed the need for what is now a special instrument of liability coverage for what they call, "various emotional injury claims." For this reason alone I would ask the good men and women who serve the state of Ohio to consider carefully providing this added layer of protection for those who serve within the dictates of their spiritual convictions founded upon their sincerely held Biblical and religious beliefs.

Thank you very much for your consideration of my statement before this committee.

Richard Powers, Sr.

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