

Chair Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Minority Member Thomas, and the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Rev. Dr. David E. MacDonald, and I oppose House Bill 36.

I am unfortunately unable to attend today's hearing in person, as I am leading worship on the university campus where I serve as the chaplain. My university, which is related to The United Methodist Church, is a welcoming place where students, faculty, and staff are welcomed in all of their diversity. The students I am worshipping with today represent a wide variety of denominations, races, ethnic groups, sexual orientations, and gender identities. We have created a space within our chapel community where all people are welcome, and where disagreements about theology are seen as opportunities for discussion and growth, and not as threats to our personal beliefs.

As a clergy person in The United Methodist Church, I have performed many weddings over the last eighteen years. During that time, I have had very few couples whom I have been unwilling to marry, but there have been a few times when I have counseled couples that they were perhaps not the right fit for one another, and that they should reconsider their decision to marry. My tradition already gives me the discretion to choose whom I will or will not marry, and I feel under no pressure or obligation to marry any couple simply because they wish to have their wedding in the chapel where I serve. Further, the university I serve has given me the discretion to decide if particular weddings are appropriate or not for our chapel. I am already allowed, by both my denomination and by employer, to choose not to marry a couple. I don't need HB 36 to protect me.

What HB 36 will do is hurt couples who have the legal right to be married, and erode the civil rights of Ohioans across the board. This bill would allow discrimination based on color, religion, sex, military status, national origin, disability, age, or ancestry. This is a bill that was aimed at same-sex couples, but the consequence of its passage would be widespread discrimination based on a large number of factors. I don't need HB 36 to protect me, and it will not protect the rights of Ohio's citizens either.

HB 36 is a distraction. At a time when Ohio is losing jobs and industry, and when some of our state's largest employers are shutting down and leaving our working class behind, we don't need our representatives in the General Assembly wasting their time, and the taxpayers' money, on needless and harmful legislation. As legislators, you have a solemn duty to uphold—to create laws that will protect the citizens of this great state, and to look out for the best interests of your constituents. This bill would do neither. I don't need HB 36 to protect me, it will not protect the rights of Ohioans, and it is a distraction from the real business of this august body.

Senators, I urge you to do what is truly right for the citizens you represent. Reject this bill, and do not send it to the floor for a vote. Let its demise here in this committee be a sign to all of Ohio, and to the nation as a whole, that our state protects all of its citizens. We don't need another law to protect our clergy and religious societies here in Ohio—we're doing just fine as we are. Please reject this bill.

Yours Sincerely,
Rev. Dr. David E. MacDonald
University Chaplain, Ohio Northern University
Ordained Elder in The United Methodist Church