

Andrew Burns

Pastor, Church of the Saviour United Methodist

11239 Fancher Rd.

Westerville, OH 43081

Chair Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Minority Member Thomas, and the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Andrew Burns and I oppose House Bill 36. I am the pastor of Church of the Saviour United Methodist outside of Westerville. I am in my fifth year of pastoral ministry. I oppose House Bill 36 for two reasons.

First, House Bill 36, the so-called “Pastor Protection Act,” is unnecessary. According to the Short Title found on the website of the Ohio Legislature under the summary of House Bill 36, this is a bill to “allow minister not to solemnize marriages contrary to beliefs.”¹ However I, as a pastor authorized by the state of Ohio to solemnize marriages, am already able to refuse to solemnize a marriage which is contrary to my beliefs, without legal repercussions. The bill under its stated purpose seeks to put into law that which is already there. It is a waste of time.

Second, House Bill 36 is harmful. This bill, if approved by the Senate and signed by the Governor, would weaken Ohio’s civil rights laws. It would erode civil rights protections for *all* existing protected classes by permitting certain businesses (based on religious belief) to discriminate against anybody on their wedding day on the basis of race, military status, and more. Marriage between two women and two men is now just as legal as marriage between a woman and a man, though some refuse to accept the validity of such a union. Similarly, marriage between a person of color and a white person is just as legal as marriage between two persons of the same race; not that long ago, within the lifetime of some of those who will vote on this bill, such a marriage was unlawful. Thanks to the civil rights protections that have been signed into law over the years, such legal discrimination is a thing of the past. However, HB36 would sabotage that progress by allowing for certain businesses to discriminate against anybody, for any reason.

I urge the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee to vote against House Bill 36 and stand against the erosion of such civil rights.

¹ Found at <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA132-HB-36>