



## ADVANCING FAITH, FAMILY AND FREEDOM

Chairman Steve Hambley, Vice Chair Tom Patton, Ranking Member Richard Brown, Members of the House Civil Justice Committee...

Good morning, my name is Tim Throckmorton. After Pastoring 22 years here in Ohio I now serve as President of Lifepointe Ministries. I am also the Midwest Director of Ministry for the Family Research Council in Washington DC and I serve on the Board of Directors of Citizens for Community Values, Ohio's Family Policy Council. I am very grateful to have the opportunity to speak to HB 369.

Reflective of the current state of religious liberty in America, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito delivered an unusually blunt warning about the future of religious liberty and free speech in the United States, saying both were in danger if the justices don't step in and protect them. "It pains me to say this, but in certain quarters, religious liberty is fast becoming a disfavored right,"

Serving in Ministry since 1996 I have witnessed the threats against churches and other organizations guided by sincere religious convictions on marriage and sexuality continue. What has emerged is a political landscape increasingly antagonistic to those with religious convictions. The message to faith-based adoption agencies, hospitals, charities, and universities is clear: unless you embrace and subscribe to the new orthodoxy on contested matters related to marriage and gender identity, you will be blacklisted, targeted, and ultimately run out of business.

Additional challenges to religious liberty and free speech relating to sexuality exist. While some of these developments do not directly affect pastors or churches, they have implications for members in every congregation.

For example, there is immense political pressure to enact legislation at the federal, state, and local level that undermines religious liberty

protections for those who hold biblically informed views on human sexuality. The people of faith—particularly those in the wedding vendor industry—are increasingly under legal pressure to compromise their beliefs in the workplace. Consider the cases of florist Barronelle Stutzman, baker Jack Phillips, and calligraphers Joanna Duka and Breanna Koski. Each of these small business owners has spent years in court fighting to protect their right to live out their faith through their work. In the case of Joanna and Breanna, the two artists lived in a city with a Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity ordinance that could have required them to either participate in events and communicate messages that violated their conscience or face criminal penalties.

The Family Research Council’s Pastors Network that I serve is over 15,000 Pastors strong across America. The hundreds of Pastors that I personally know and serve here in Ohio are deeply concerned with the potential harm to religious freedom that HB 369 can bring to their churches, the lives of the thousands of congregants that they represent and the many communities that they are called to serve. I heartily agree with the assessment of Citizens for Community values that *“this sexual orientation/gender identity bill is the greatest threat to women, children, and religious freedom in Ohio.”*

I want to say thank you to each of you for your time in hearing my remarks and for your service to this great state of ours and wish you a blessed and Happy Thanksgiving!



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The Family Research Council