

CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF OHIO

November 19, 2020

Testimony in Opposition to HB 369 Expanding civil rights laws based upon sexual orientation

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, my name is Jim Tobin. I am an Associate Director for the Catholic Conference of Ohio. The Catholic Conference is opposed to passage of HB 369.

The Conference's opposition is based upon three arguments:

- 1) Long-standing teachings regarding sexual differences, marriage and family life.** (*Catechism of the Catholic Church #2357-2359*)
- 2) Concerns that religious liberty protections in the *as-introduced version* of HB 369 are inadequate.**
- 3) Concerns that HB 369 will not protect the conscience rights of individual persons of faith.**

Church Teaching and Religious Liberty Protections:

Regarding HB 369, the Catholic Bishops of Ohio wrote in their January 2020 letter to legislators the following:

"The Catholic Church stands against unjust discrimination. We encourage public policies that will address bullying and hate crimes. However, "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" (SOGI) non-discrimination legislation such as HB 369 would negate and inappropriately redefine reasonable laws that currently protect the rights of conscience and religious liberty. Of major concern is the possibility that certain actions our Church takes regarding behaviors we view as immoral will be perceived and litigated as discriminatory." (The full letter is attached).

HB 369 bill leaves intact section 4112.02 (P), which addresses religious exemption under Ohio's current Civil Rights Law. We believe that this particular section should be strengthened. One concern is that this religious exemption provision is not applicable in many local SOGI related nondiscrimination laws. All such laws should allow for religious exemptions. In addition there should be more explicit references to exemptions related to employment, education, housing, real property, or access to facilities by religious organizations.

Conscience Protections:

While religious exemptions may help protect religious organizations, such exemptions may not protect the conscience rights of individual persons based upon their faith beliefs. In addition, profit-making corporations such as Christian bookstores, religious publishing houses, and religious television and radio stations may be asked to compromise their faith-based principles.

Thank you for this opportunity.

CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF OHIO

January 24, 2020

The Honorable Representative
77 S. High St.,
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Representative

The Catholic Conference of Ohio is opposed to HB 369. This legislation, pending in the House Civil Justice Committee, seeks to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Catholic Church stands against unjust discrimination. We encourage public policies that will address bullying and hate crimes. However, “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” (SOGI) non-discrimination legislation such as HB 369 would negate and inappropriately redefine reasonable laws that currently protect the rights of conscience and religious liberty. Of major concern is the possibility that certain actions our Church takes regarding behaviors we view as immoral will be perceived and litigated as discriminatory.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops wrote:

“SOGI laws, using ambiguous definitions for both sexual orientation and gender identity, potentially impact all religious institutions that seek to uphold the Church’s understanding of sexual difference. For example, “sexual orientation” laws could force a Catholic school to retain a math teacher for obtaining a same-sex “marriage” because they do the same for those who obtain opposite-sex marriages. “Gender identity” laws may seek to force a women’s shelter run by a Catholic agency to allow a male to stay there because he “identifies” as female. The Church certainly stands against unjust discrimination, but SOGI legislation tends to go much further than this, introducing terms into law that are not clearly defined, and banning reasonable rules that acknowledge male and female differences.” (*Marriage FAQ’s, Marriage Unique for a Reason*, USCCB).

Thank you for this opportunity to share our concerns. Thank you, also, for your service to our State.

Respectfully,

Most Rev. Dennis M. Schnurr
Chairman
Catholic Conference of Ohio
Archbishop of Cincinnati

Most Rev. Joseph R. Binzer
Auxiliary Bishop
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Most Rev. J. Michael Botean
Bishop of Romanian Catholic
Eparchy of Canton

Most Rev. Robert J. Brennan
Bishop of Columbus

Most Rev. Bohdan J. Danylo
Bishop of Ukrainian Catholic
Eparchy of St. Josaphat

Bishop Milan Lach, S.J.
Bishop of Byzantine
Catholic Eparchy of Parma

Most Rev. Jeffrey Monforton
Bishop of Steubenville

Most Rev. George V. Murry, S.J.
Bishop of Youngstown

Most Rev. Nelson J. Perez
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Most Rev. Daniel E. Thomas
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