

Ohio House Civil Justice Committee
 77 South High Street
 Columbus, Ohio 43215

November 19, 2020

Dear Honorable Chair Representative Stephen D. Hambley and Civil Justice Committee,

We are a diverse group of leading clergy representing ninety (90) congregations throughout the Buckeye Bible Belt of North Central Ohio. We are unified by Biblical Truth¹ and follow the instructions found in Matthew 25: to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to take in the stranger, to cloth the naked, to visit the sick and to counsel the incarcerated. Our congregations even serve the LGBT community and their loved ones without prejudice.

Having said this, not only are we unified by Biblical Truth that says every human being is made in the image of GOD (Genesis 1), that GOD made male and female (Genesis 1), and that man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife (Genesis 2), we are also unified in our opposition to House Bill 369 and its companion legislation Senate Bill 11 which has been proposed to amend the Ohio Revised Code.

It is our understanding HB 369/SB11 will:

- 1) Require men and boys be allowed in women's bathrooms, locker rooms and showers if they claim to identify as women
- 2) Require boys be allowed to play in girls' sports in public schools if they claim to identify as women
- 3) Allow government to remove children from parents' custody if they do not consent to dangerous conversion/hormone therapy
- 4) Force women's homeless and domestic violence shelters to allow men who claim to identify as women to bathe and bunk with victimized women
- 5) Force doctors to participate in 'gender transition' procedures
- 6) Prohibit faith-based ministries from operating in line with their religious beliefs

As servants to the orphan, widow, poor, and incarcerated, we believe the following about HB 369/ SB 11:

I. The proponents of HB 369/SB 11 have not sufficiently demonstrated the need for this ordinance. We believe Ohio is a tolerant and diverse state. LGBT persons presently have no traits of a discriminated class of people. LGBT persons have the support of political elites,² have no economic disenfranchisement,³ and have no ongoing systemic discrimination.⁴

There is no Ohio law permitting discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation.

II. If passed, HB 369/ SB11 will force individuals to take part in events or adopt ideas that violate their faith and their First Amendment rights. It is indisputable that sexual orientation/ gender identity (SOGI) laws similar to HB 369/ SB 11, have caused persons exercising their Constitutionally-guaranteed rights to suffer economic disenfranchisement in other states.

For instance, Colorado cake artist Jack Phillips lost forty-percent of his business and over half his staff⁵ after being cited by the Colorado Civil Rights Commission for refusing to make a gender-transition cake. Despite

winning his case at the U.S. Supreme Court, the State of Colorado showed its hostility toward Mr. Phillips for his religious convictions and filed a lawsuit against him a second time. ⁶

In fact, seventy-four year old floral artist Barronelle Stutzman was forced by Washington State Supreme Court to create custom floral design for a gay wedding against her religious convictions. Despite referring the customer to florists who do provide such services, she is now faced with complying with the court's ultimatum, or face bankruptcy. ⁷

In another example, ordained ministers Don and Lynn Knapp operated a wedding chapel in Idaho but were forced to violate their religious conscience. City officials threatened them with criminal prosecution and fines under the city's SOGI ordinance if they did not perform same-sex ceremonies. ⁸

III. If passed, HB 369/ SB 11 will lead to major violations of privacy. Arbitrary re-definitions of gender proposed by this legislation would jeopardize women's privacy and security in public accommodations like restrooms, locker rooms, and showers in public swimming pools and fitness centers. This creates huge privacy concerns for the majority of people who do not want to share these private facilities with members of the opposite sex. ⁹

Consequently, in 2016 leading clergy from one hundred and two (102) congregations in Richland County, Ohio opposed the Obama restroom mandate. Their joint-letter told school and state officials the dictate "defies objectivity and logic by not classifying students as male or female on the basis of their biological sex at birth." They also stated the mandate "triggers intolerance and retribution with people having a different opinion." ¹⁰

In Anchorage, Alaska, a drunk biological man who identified as a woman was denied access because the faith-based homeless shelter did not want to force vulnerable women to sleep next to a biological man. As a result, the Downtown Hope Center was slapped with a federal lawsuit. ¹¹

IV. Lastly, if passed, HB 369/ SB 11 will limit access to needed social services by effectively driving out faith-based providers. These SOGI laws have been used in several states and localities to shut down faith-based adoption agencies. In Illinois alone, nearly 3,000 children were displaced when this happened. ¹² Grants offered through the Violence Against Women Act have a SOGI provision that dictates the hiring practices of institutions that get grants to help battered women. Because this provision violates the conscience of religious institutions, they are unable to provide assistance desperately needed by battered women. ¹³

Sadly, counseling ministries operated by people who have left the transgender lifestyle would likely not be allowed to operate. ¹⁴

In closing, it is our corporate belief the dubious legacy of HB 369/ SB 11 would be a nightmare for Ohioans, turning the First Amendment upside down, and decimating religious freedom as we know it. If passed, HB 369/ SB 11 will leave women, children, and persons of religious conviction as second-class citizens. There is no tweaking this disastrous bill

Thank you for your consideration,

The following are clergy cosigners representing ninety (90) congregations throughout North Central Ohio in Richland County (64), Ashland County (8), Crawford County (7), Wayne County (3), Morrow County (3), Knox County (2), Huron County (1), Medina County (1), Stark County (1)

Pastor Christopher Replogle, Crestline Calvary Baptist
 Pastor Denny Finnegan, First Evangelical Presbyterian
 Pastor Ron Smals, Woodville Grace Brethren Church
 Pastor Steve Schag, Shelby Calvary Baptist Church
 Pastor Russell Stanford, All GOD's Believers Church
 Pastor James Marshall, Ganges Community Church
 Pastor Dink Porter, First Church of the Open Bible
 Pastor Dave Rentzel, Abundant Life Tabernacle
 Pastor Ted Howard, Mansfield Apostolic Holiness
 Pastor Dan Zediker, Mansfield Mission Point Church
 Pastor Doug Tackett, Taylortown Community Church
 Pastor Mike Rose, Hope on the Hill Chapel
 Pastor Ron Puff, Pleasant Valley Baptist Church
 Pastor Hank Webb, Belmont Community Church
 Elder Mark Hamilton, Providence Church
 Pastor James Hill, Paradise Freewill Baptist Church
 Pastor Larry Hulver, New Liberty Baptist Church
 Pastor John Grimm, Plymouth United Methodist
 Pastor Les Vnasdale, Cornerstone Grace Brethren
 Pastor Larry Hill, Bethel Freewill Baptist
 Pastor Bryan Schatzinger, Calvary Chapel Mansfield
 Pastor Bruce Copley, Mansfield Faith Chapel
 Pastor Joshua Cole, Crestline Tabernacle of Praise
 Pastor Ferlie Yates, Hanna Road Church of GOD
 Pastor Patrick Bailey, Butler North Bend Church
 Pastor Rick Wiseman, Promised Land Fellowship
 Pastor Floyd Allen Philippian Community Church
 Pastor David Parsons, Zion's Refuge Baptist
 Pastor Joe Maggelet, Ashland Fellowship Christian Athletes
 Pastor Robert O'Brien, Apostolic Faith Assembly
 Pastor Robert Bird, Vermillion Baptist Church
 Pastor Scott Maglott, Lexington Church of the Nazarene
 Pastor Sylvester Ginn, Hesed Agape Fellowship
 Pastor Mike Wilson, Lincoln Heights Baptist Church
 Pastor Paul Larson, First English Evangelical Lutheran
 Pastor John Temple, Loudonville Trinity Community
 Pastor John Bouquet, Savannah Bethel Baptist Church
 Pastor Chris Spencer, Crestline Grace Baptist Church
 Pastor Matthew Smith, Crestline Love Action Church
 Pastor Brian Phillips, New Beginnings Freewill Baptist
 Pastor Layton Broome, Paradise Hill United Methodist
 Pastor Rob Ratcliff, North Woodbury Freewill Baptist
 Pastor David Guild, Mansfield Foursquare Church
 Pastor Mark Dettmer, Pleasant Grove Community Church
 Pastor James Spencer, Mansfield Peoples' Baptist

Pastor Aaron Boggs, Fredericktown Freewill Baptist
 Pastor Bruce Philippi, Journey Life Center
 Pastor Rich Rader, Mayflower Congregational
 Pastor George Lewis, Shelby Temple of GOD
 Pastor Russ Smith, Shiloh Wesley Evangelical
 Pastor Rick Lewis, Shelby Church of GOD
 Pastor Don Wilson, Mansfield Faith Assembly
 Pastor Clint Zeigler, Sovereign Christ Church
 Pastor Matt Potosky, Albion Brethren Church
 Pastor Steve Breneman, Awakening Church
 Pastor Anthony Cooper, Shelby Life Church
 Pastor Mark Wireman, Shiloh Pentecostal Church
 Pastor Tim Davis, Newville Baptist Church
 Pastor Les-Grace Farley, Irresistible Church
 Pastor El Akuchie, Godsfield House of Prayer
 Pastor Chad Hayes, Mansfield Caeserea Baptist
 Pastor Mike Stine, Clear Fork Alliance Church
 Rabbi William Hallbrook, Ontario Sar Shalom Center
 Pastor Dallas Waggle, Lucas Foursquare Church
 Pastor James Mitchell, Polk New Liberty Baptist
 Elder Moe Hill, Grace Evangelical Free Church
 Pastor Matthew Pond, First Freewill Baptist
 Pastor Dan Baer, Mansfield Gospel Assembly
 Pastor David Bates, Unity Freewill Baptist
 Pastor Patrick Bailey, Danville North Bend Church
 Pastor Clyde Kerby, Ministries of Hope & Healing
 Pastor Mark Abel, Southview Grace Brethren
 Pastor Robert Kurtz, Mansfield Temple Baptist
 Rabbi Bob Bauer, Beit El Elyon Messianic
 Pastor Mike Grant, Shreve United Methodist
 Pastor Howdie Burnett, Perrysville Baptist Church
 Pastor Steve Baldridge, Rome Community Church
 Pastor Earl Eiklor, Cornerstone Freewill Baptist
 Pastor Randy Raynes, Mansfield Fellowship Baptist
 Pastor Steven Hodges, Galion Gospel Baptist
 Pastor George Swain, Homersville Grace Brethren
 Pastor Ben Gregg, Plymouth Church of GOD
 Pastor Kevin Evans, Ganges Liberty Baptist
 Pastor Tim George, Abundant Grace Fellowship
 Pastor Paul Matthewson, Maranatha Bible Baptist
 Pastor Glen Phillips, Hillside First Church of GOD
 Pastor Dana Gammill, Cathedral of Life
 Pastor Joe Smith, Westside Baptist Church
 Pastor Mark Meyer, Lex Gracepoint Sanctuary
 Pastor Jerry O'Brien, Orville Faith Harvest Fellowship

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