

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

Good morning and thank you for allowing me to address you today.

My name is John Michael LaRue, and I am the senior pastor of First Baptist Church Miamisburg in Miamisburg, Ohio.

I am here today to speak clearly in opposition against the proposed House Bill 369, the Ohio Fairness Act. I believe this bill, if passed, will fundamentally be harmful to our society and not produce the intended result of human flourishing. I have four primary concerns over this bill: 1) it reflects a rejection of biological science, 2) it does real damage to women in our society, 3) it does real damage to children, and 4) it threatens religious liberty.

First, this bill reflects a rejection of biological science. The other protected classes in our law all have either a verifiable, biologically provable backing to their positions or an unalienable right provided them by God. Protections based upon race, age, sex, and disability are all classes that reflect such verifiable, biologically provable backing. Protections based upon one's religious beliefs is a deeply held understanding that no one can be forced to believe or do things against their conscience. However, introducing into these protected classes something as changeable and undefined as gender identity and sexual orientation is an instance where settled, biological science is rejected in favor of a malleable, post-modern theory about what constitutes a human being. Such rejection is harmful to the flourishing of human society.

Second, this bill does real damage to women in our society. From providing biological men access to private bathrooms and changing areas of women to enabling biological men to compete against biological females in full contact sports, this bill would result in a turning back the clock against females in our society. The science is indisputable when it comes to athletic competitions between biological men and biological females that there are structural advantages that men have in their bone densities, size, and speed, yet this bill would result in female high school athletes having to compete in unfair scenarios against biological men. That is real potential damage to women in our society.

Third, this bill does real damage to children in our society. Children in their young pre-teen years are being considered for life-altering, body-altering surgical procedures. President-elect Joe Biden has affirmed a child as young as eight years old begin surgical procedures to transition from their biological gender to the gender of their choice. Such decisions represent real damage to children. There are significant studies out there warning against the failures of such procedures to produce the intended human flourishing that is desired. Instead of flourishing, there is a path of devastation for those left in the wake of the such decisions.

Fourth, this bill threatens religious liberty. Religious liberty is not something that relates only to what a person does when he gathers to worship; religious liberty relates to who people are in the core essence of their being. One of the intended goals of this bill is to constrain the conscience of millions of Americans to be coerced to act in a way that is against their deeply held religious

beliefs. Such forced coercion is deeply against our common held ideals in this country and out to be rejected outright.

I am a husband, father of two young girls, and pastor to a church with many precious children, teenagers, and young adults. I am deeply concerned that this bill seeks to fundamentally reorient our society and poses a serious challenge to religious freedom, parental rights, and the safety of women and children. For this reason, I encourage you to vote against the passage of House Bill 369.

Thank you for your gracious consideration of my testimony this morning.