

Connor opposition testimony HB183

Chairman Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller and members of the House Higher Education Committee, I'm The Rev. Alice Connor, assistant Rector of St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in Anderson Township.

I am here to implore you not to pass HB183 out of committee--it is hurtful, unnecessary and unenforceable.

There are some loud Christian voices supporting this and other bills restricting trans youth. We should not be passing bills in the secular world based on people's faith, but since it's been brought up, I have a thing or two to say about it as a called and ordained minister in the church of God.

I am here to be clear that the voices supporting this bill do not represent me nor the entirety of the Christian faith. Indeed, there are hundreds of thousands of the Christian faithful who are gay and trans, who love gay and trans people, and who are horrified by bills and theologies like this. The loud Christian voices do not speak for me. They do not speak for my parishioners or my family or my neighborhood. They do not even speak for the majority of -conservative- Christians. There's a recent Fox News poll where 86% of respondents said it's a problem that families with transgender children are targets of political attacks. Of Fox News listeners, 86%. Americans are not in favor of these anti-trans laws.

Furthermore, trans people are statistically significantly more likely to be the victims of such attacks than the perpetrators. I would love for young women not to live in fear of men attacking them. And I would love for us to blame the appropriate parties here, not give in to scare tactics.

Representative Lear's testimony includes this point:

"In many places around the world, children were not valued like they have been in Western society. This is still true today. Children have been sold for sex, put to work in mines and factories,...It's been different in countries with a Judeo-Christian foundation where the political leaders have often been rooted in faith."

I am sorry to say this to an esteemed member of the legislature, but she is wrong. This country has a long, terrible history of exploiting children, from children literally working in mines and factories in the industrial age to news stories of children staffing fast food restaurants just this year, from the residential schools for native children to the shockingly high number of children who have been abused by priests and pastors, we in the western, theoretically-Christian world do not have a good track record. Toledo, Ohio, as I'm sure everyone in this room knows, is a major hub for child trafficking in this country. Our presumed faith in Jesus is not, it turns out, a barrier to exploitation. The presence of Jesus is not the absence of harm.

The message and life of Jesus of Nazareth was one of radical inclusion of those the people around him thought unacceptable. From my faith and from the faith of thousands and thousands of other people, trans people are made in the image and likeness of God exactly as they are. That is, they are made in the image and likeness of God *as trans people*.

That first story of Creation in our Bibles, it's beautiful--a love letter to the glory and wild beauty of the natural world and our place in it. It comes from the wonder early peoples had as they looked around them--how could this be? Who made this? God, they said, God made this and called it all good. And it was so. "Male and female God created them" says Genesis, and that makes

sense, right? We see typically see male and female. But. Scripture is so much more rich than the surface level--scripture is poetry. There's a way of writing in Hebrew called a merism where two extremes are named to then include everything in between--In Isaiah, God says "I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe;" which means God has a hand in the good and the bad and everything in between. God, in the Jewish and Christian traditions, is vast, transcendent, contains all things. God contains all genders, male, female and everything in between. And God created humans in the image and likeness of God, male and female and everything in between.

A parishioner of mine many years ago used to say "God don't make no mistakes." My trans friends realizing who they truly are is not God having made a mistake or them misunderstanding what God did in making them. The fact that they are trans -is- how they were made--fearfully and wonderfully made.

All of this is to say, HB183 is not of God, is not representative of the whole of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and will not work to protect anyone. Please do not pass it out of committee. And please consider calling me for a chat. Thank you.