

Chair Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Minority Member Thomas, and the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Adam Long, I am the Lead Pastor at Move United Church, and I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 11, the Ohio Fairness Act.

When facing a dilemma, I like to ask a question popularized by Pastor Andy Stanley: “Is this a problem to be solved or a tension to be managed?”

If something is a problem to be solved, then there’s one right answer; a slam-dunk solution – all we have to do is find a way to discover and implement the plan.

But if something is a tension to be managed, then we have to consider how to find the overlap of two different approaches.

When it comes to the Ohio Fairness Act, we have to ask ourselves, “Is this a problem to be solved or a tension to be managed?” I would suggest that the answer depends on our identities.

For LGBTQ folks in our state, this is a problem to be solved. They simply want the same protection from discrimination granted to the rest of Ohioans.

But the tension arises when some people of faith argue that granting LGBTQ protections would harm the expression of their religious identities.

As an ordained Christian minister, I understand the fear. There really are people who would like to limit my religious rights. There really are proposals that would curtail my religious liberty.

But the Ohio Fairness Act is not one of them.

As a Christian, I might not agree with my Muslim neighbor when it comes to theology. But I would not discriminate against her in a hiring process.

In a similar way, some people of faith may not agree with certain expressions of sexuality or gender identity. But no one should be able to discriminate against such citizens when reviewing rental applications.

So, is the Ohio Fairness Act a problem to be solved or a tension to be managed?

My Christian faith requires me to treat others as I want to be treated. If I have any integrity at all when it comes to my Christian identity, then I must say that this is a problem to be solved. How? Simply by granting others the same rights I myself enjoy.

I am least like Jesus when I refuse to do what he did: sacrifice on behalf of others. Perhaps this is an opportunity for Christians—and other people of faith—in Ohio to practice what we preach.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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