

Chair Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan and Leader Thomas,

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for HB 36, the Ohio Pastor Protection Act. Our congregation and I hold to the Biblical view that for a marriage to be recognized by God it must be a union between one man and one woman. We view this as a positive belief, rather than a negative one, for the blessing of God brings with it great benefit for an entire society. This is not our only position on marriage, but certainly a foundation of what constitutes a scriptural marriage union.

We believe the Ohio Pastor Protection Act can:

- Encourage churches and pastors to serve our communities more freely and emphasize those blessings of faith and trust in Jesus Christ our Saviour.
- Protect churches from a small number of activists in our society whose sole aim is to repudiate our beliefs.
- Alleviate a state of unrest and grave concern in our congregations for their continued existence.
- Be a helpful tool to the Constitutions of the United States and the State of Ohio to bolster and enhance the protections they provide.
- Prevent unduly burdening an already-overworked court system.
- Permit churches to invest their limited manpower, focus and resources back into their community instead of squandering them in civil lawsuits.

We applaud the efforts of Representative Vitale as well as the forty co-sponsors of HB 36 which will restore confidence to exercise our legal rights in the face of an ever-litigious society.

The opponents of this bill repeatedly assured the Community and Family Advancement Committee in the Ohio House that the Ohio Pastor Protection Act is unnecessary and redundant primarily on the basis that no church has ever been sued over this issue. I stated then that it was an assertion of future action based primarily on past action. Of course they were unable to prognosticate the future, since churches in other states have, indeed, gone to court over these issues.

Not only have lawsuits been filed concerning same-sex marriage ceremonies against Christian bakers, Christian B&B owners, Christian photographers, Christian printers, state and local magistrates who state their Christian beliefs, Christian counselors, clerks of court, Christian owners or operators of pizza places, faith-based colleges, Christian T-shirt manufacturers, a Christian farm, a Christian campground, and even Christian wedding chapels, but now also against churches. The redundancy argument against H.B. 36 is moot. When this bill was first introduced nearly four years ago, many pastors believed that a community which has zealously filed lawsuits against these groups – in spite of their sincerely-held religious beliefs – would not suddenly come to a screeching halt simply because they find themselves in the shadow of a steeple.

Daniel L. Wolvin  
SENIOR PASTOR



Steve Wolvin  
ASSISTANT PASTOR

Since the Obergefell decision, companies specializing in church insurance have notified their clients regarding the likelihood of civil litigation and have been attempting to prepare churches to expect lawsuits over this issue. Church Mutual Insurance Company, Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company, Guide One Insurance, Southern Mutual Church Insurance Company, as well as many others, have detailed their coverage guidelines to us in the assumption of future litigation over the refusal to participate in same-sex ceremonies. Generally, the best advice they give to churches because of the fear of litigation is to change from being inclusive to the community to becoming exclusive.

In addition, we have great apprehension that public accommodation laws may be applied to the properties of churches and religious organizations. This has already resulted in a withdrawal of the involvement of churches from their communities. Ohio's neighborhoods need churches which are involved in the communities – not withdrawn from them. Congregations who once happily assisted their communities with providing a place for wedding receptions, Boy Scout meetings, community food drives, community organizational meetings, polling places and a host of other gatherings, may now be forced to refuse admittance to those groups for fear of being labeled a "place of public accommodation." Once they have been categorized as a place of "public accommodation," those churches will then be required to provide equal-access even in a religious expression to which they are opposed. This fear of litigation has already had a negative effect on churches and will certainly continue to compound unless we are afforded a safety net from overreaching lawsuits.

Chair Bacon, and members of this committee, the thousands of churches in Ohio and its hundreds of thousands of congregants cannot remain as proverbial frogs in a pot of water, while the heat of litigation all about them rapidly rises. We urge you to recommend passage of HB 36.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Daniel L. Wolvin".

Daniel L. Wolvin  
Senior Pastor

