

Opening

Thank you Chairman Bacon, Vice Chairman Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas and Members of the Ohio House Senate Judiciary Committee for this opportunity to address you today.

I am Pastor Neal Dearyan and I represent the Chili Crossroads Bible Church in Fresno, OH.

Body of the testimony

I firmly believe this is an important issue. Pastors fill an important need in the fabric of our society.

Protecting their rights to fulfill their God-given duties is critical to any free people. Placing requirements on Ohio clergy to act against our conscience and use Ohio church facilities in a way that goes against our sincerely held religious beliefs would damage us as a state. The very nature of pastoring requires us to follow our conscience, not violate it. Please don't ask us to put our stamp of approval on something that violates our conscience, because we can't.

The Bible is the foundation of everything we stand for. As society changes, we are anchored firmly to God's

unchanging Word. We are duty-bound not to move one inch from the clear teaching of scripture.

Opponents of the Pastor Protection Act say we are already afforded enough protection by existing laws. I disagree. Court cases from across the land show that religious liberty is under attack so we come today asking for the law to protect us.

Section 1.07 of the Ohio Constitution says, “All men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience.” It goes on to say, “...it shall be the duty of the general assembly to pass suitable laws to protect every religious denomination in the peaceable enjoyment of its own mode of public worship...”

I call on you to provide the protection that the Ohio Constitution directs you to provide. I am grateful for your kind consideration and hearing my opinion on this important issue. Thank you for serving us, the citizens of the great state of Ohio.

Closing

Again, I thank you for this opportunity. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.