Chair Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Minority Member Thomas, and the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Kelley Fox and I oppose House Bill 36.

Thank you for this opportunity to present my issue with House Bill 36. I believe that this bill, although it is fashioned as a legislation to protect pastors and venues from having to perform LGBT weddings in circumstances that go against religious beliefs, it also takes away protections from other groups that need protection when a religious belief can be changed.

As a pastor, when reading this legislation I find myself confused. As a pastor, I have the ability to marry whoever it that is accepted by my denomination and the rules that are given by said denomination. As such, even if I wanted to perform an LGBT wedding, I cannot yet do that in my church. That given, even though this is seen as a protection for me, I don’t understand why I need this protection.

As a citizen, I am concerned. Where do one’s religious beliefs, which can be flexible, run into taking away rights from citizens? Regardless of your own beliefs on LGBT marriage, it is a national right for LGBT people and I believe that by opening up the ability to decline this right to marriage based on religious beliefs also opens up the possibility of people denying marriage to people based on other things such as race, which would have previously been protected.

As a woman of color in a interracial marriage, I think of the possibility of a religion or even a sect of Christianity that has the ability to marry that decides that because I am black and my spouse is white that (if we were to try to be married after this bill would be passed) we should not be married because of racial mixing. This is a real threat and I cannot support a bill that allows for religious beliefs to take away rights of protected people.

As I have previously said, I am already protected by my denomination and I am not required to marry LGBT people. No one is forcing me to marry them and people already experience enough issues finding someone to marry them and for them to have a wedding that should a joyous union of two people.

Listen to the needs of your people and do not take away rights that are already protected to protect a threat that does not exist.

Thank you again for your time.

Rev. Kelley A Fox