

MEMO

TO: Pastors, Ministry Leaders

FROM: Randall L. Wenger, Esq.

Chief Counsel, Independence Law Center

DATE: October, 2015



Our attorneys have been working with churches, ministries and businesses to develop or amend corporate documents in order to protect their religious freedom, now more than ever in light of the US Supreme Court ruling that redefined marriage across the entire nation. We offer this service free of charge.

But no such language is fail safe, especially when new laws arise that specifically target churches, ministries and people of faith. Such is the case with the “Fairness Act,” legislation currently being considered in Harrisburg, a proposal that would grant special status to persons based on their “sexual orientation,” “gender identity,” or “gender expression” in Pennsylvania’s Human Relations Act.

This bill would severely restrict religious liberty should it become law. It contains no effective exemption or protection for religious liberty. For example, under the public accommodation provision in the bill, freedom to direct the use of certain church facilities is in jeopardy. This could be read to prevent a church from refusing a same-sex wedding or reception, even if such use is in opposition to church teaching.

The employment provisions of the bill would prohibit Christian schools from limiting the hiring of faculty and staff only to those that adhere to and live by Biblical sexual norms. Christian ministries such as adoption agencies have been put out of business under such laws, and tax-exemptions for Christian ministries are also put at risk.

Thus, we believe it is in your interest, and that of your congregation or ministry, to help defeat this legislation. I am asking you, as a leader and citizen, to use your voice and influence by contacting your State Senator and State Representative, and asking them to oppose SB 974 (Senate) and HB 1510 (House). If you are able, please consider a face-to-face visit with one or both of them. Such a visit would exert significant influence on behalf of religious freedom. All of these activities as described are permissible for you as a citizen and under 501(c)(3) guidelines for non-profits as well.

There is a sense of urgency to this request, since this legislation could move at any time, and Gov. Wolf views it as a priority.

We would be happy to speak with you to provide more information about this threat to religious liberty, and how to best communicate with your Senator and Representative.

Feel free to call us at (717) 545-0600. You can also utilize our Citizen Action Center on our website at www.pafamily.org/action. Thank you.