

Testimony in Opposition of SB 4
Senate Civil Rights, Judiciary, and Public Safety
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Eileen McNeil, President
Citizens for Traditional Values

Good afternoon Madame Chair and members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 4. My name is Eileen McNeil, and I am the President of Citizens for Traditional Values and come before you to express our opposition to this bill as it currently stands.

This is an important discussion to have as it would enact a broad social policy that could impact the lives and the livelihoods of many around the state. It should rightly be discussed and debated in the legislature and not decided by fiat by a court. I do appreciate that you have taken back the law-making authority duly held by you which was usurped by the MI Supreme Court this past summer.

Hate and discrimination of any kind is unacceptable. Those words by Sen. Chang posted on Facebook are ones that I heartily believe and would echo – as would most Christians, Jews, Buddhists and other communities of faith. As Christians, as well as those of other faiths, we believe that God created all human life in His image and that every person has positive value and deserves respect.

That is why I am here today before you to oppose the current version of this bill to amend the Elliot Larsen Civil Rights Act of 1976. I am deeply concerned that Senate Bill 4 does not provide

any protections for those who identify with deeply held religious convictions and for the expression of those convictions.

This creation of new protected classes of individuals, gives new legal causes of action on the basis of “sexual orientation and gender identity and expression,” It will have an egregious impact by increasing regulation on religious organizations and in particular small business people exercising their sincere religious conscience in running their businesses.

What are the unintended consequences? That is important as you make law. These vague and overbroad categories, if enacted into law, could enable arbitrary discrimination to occur against people of faith in a manner that policymakers may not have previously considered. In essence it authorizes government action forcing businesses and citizens of faith of all backgrounds (e.g., Muslim, Jewish, Christian, etc.), to make a terrible choice: act against their Constitutionally protected consciences and their sincerely held religious identity or face the full force of the state’s governmental and regulatory power in protracted legal battles, both administratively and in the courts.

Michigan is flush with money today, as we heard this week. However, we all know that economic cycles go up and down. The State of MI should not put itself in a position to spend hard-earned taxpayer money on lawsuits that could have been prevented.

Senator Wojno, you have stated that you are proud to serve on the committee that can help make sure every Michigander has equal protection under the law. I hope that ALSO includes businesses, religious institutions and citizens who believe in traditional ideas of family and human sexuality and their rights to have a deeply held religious identity and expression.

It is important for the Legislature and policy makers to take a serious look at the interests of all the citizens of this state before making such sweeping changes to Michigan law. In recent years every state that has adopted new protected classes of people in its state civil rights law ALSO have included religious liberty protections.

I would urge you to slow down, and take the time to include an amendment that would accommodate the fundamental constitutional rights of all your citizens.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Eileen McNeil
President
Citizens for Traditional Values



ctv@ctvmichigan.org

(517) 321-1390