

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable members of the Judiciary Committee, Good Morning and thank-you for this opportunity to speak with you. My name is Jack Lacey and I am here this morning to speak in opposition to the bills you are considering. I am an authorized lay pastor in the United Church of Christ and I am blessed to serve a small church in down east. We are an open and affirming congregation meaning that we have agreed together to a public covenant proclaiming our welcome and love for all peoples regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identification recognizing that all of us are the beloved children of our creator. My wife and I have raised 5 young people and because 2 of them had some particular challenges we are well familiar with the challenges that come with being a parent.

Like all of us I have been exposed to the very public debate around this complex and seemingly difficult issue. I stand opposed to any effort to change the law in any way that fails to protect the dignity of any person or may make an effort to persecute them.

How did we get here? When did it become acceptable to believe that empathy, compassion were and are threats to civilization? When did it become a trend to set aside the commandment to love one another and instead engage in strategic persecution to further divide us as a people and to add fuel to the fire of hate that has become the real threat to civilization and human flourishing?

My thoughts keep returning to the precious young people who are being targeted by this legislation And to their parents. My heart breaks when I think of the young people that I have known who feel with every fiber of their being that they are not and cannot be who they truly are. My faith compels me to work toward a world that welcomes them rather than demonizes them.

It is my firm belief that each and every one of us is created whole and unique in the image of our creator. We are all the dearly beloved of our creator.

We have the freedom to do right, to act justly and to love one another with reckless and exuberant abandon. We have the chance to lead this conversation, to set a template that others around the country might use as this very same issue comes up.

The Holy one asks very little of us. Love God with all of your heart, all of your strength and all of your mind and your neighbor as yourself. Nowhere in that exhortation is the authorization of the advancement of avarice or deceit.

So a Thought from Rachel Held Evans perhaps my favorite author.

"Perhaps we could push beyond these legalistic gender roles about acting like good men and acting like good women and spend more time acting like Jesus"

May it be so.

Please vote ought not to pass on this bill.