

Comment Report

HSB 614

A bill for an act relating to the exercise of religion, and including effective date and applicability provisions.(See HF 2454.)

Subcommittee Members: Holt-CH, James, Wheeler

Date: 01/30/2024

Time: 12:30 PM

Location: RM 102, Sup. Ct. Consult

Name: Sandy Wilson

Comment: Citizen Engagement declares IN FAVOR of HSB 614. Please move the bill.

Name: Ashley Miller

Comment: Being Christian does not entitle you to a free pass to discriminate against others who are different from you. Vote against this nonsense. We are a democracy, not a theocracy.

Name: Mandryx Riordan

Comment: The separation of church and state has always been an imperative part of our country's history. The people of the United States subscribe to a multitude of different religions. The freedom to practice one's faith does not include the freedom to discriminate against others due to their beliefs. This bill is going to provide certain individuals the right to discriminate against protected classes such as; gender, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, sexual orientation, and religion. Absolutely unthinkable. HSB 614 will not pass!

Name: emma denney

Comment: I am writing in opposition to the bill, and urge a 'no pass.' This bill allows bigots to hide behind "religion," and empowers not just individuals, but businesses and virtually all "legal entities" to discriminate against anyone they like through a claim of religion. I am disappointed that chairman Holt and other legislators are wasting time, taxpayer money, and energy on this bill at all.

Name: Elizabeth Lefler

Comment: Please do not support this legislation. It would allow folks to weaponize their religion to openly discriminate. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act would allow people to pick and choose which laws they will follow based on their stated religious beliefs; this would be harmful for many vulnerable Iowans.

Name: Oliver Young

Comment: I fundamentally disagree with the assertion that one's religious beliefs entitles them to ignore laws and discriminate legally. To do so is to ignore all common sense, and to reject the premise that all deserve equal treatment under the law. If we, as a state, are willing to legalize oppression based on religious beliefs, we are no better than oppressors and abusers. Think of those who will be harmed. Think of those who need protection. Do not abandon us.

Name: Cassandra Higgs

Comment: So, is human sacrifice *not* considered murder, so long as it's part of a religion? Or is this bill just an incentive for folks to harm and discriminate against people of demographics they don't like? I have a feeling it's just the latter, but either way, I

don't want it. I'm a firm believer of separation of church and state.

Name: Beulah Crabtree

Comment: Religion is a fcking pox upon this planet.

Name: Kelsey Howard

Comment: I oppose this bill.

Name: Alaina Elliott-Wherry

Comment: I STRONGLY oppose this bill. Religion should NOT be used as a weapon or justification to discriminate, and that is what this bill will allow! Vote NO on HSB614.

Name: Marlee Myers

Comment: This bill poses a substantial threat to marginalized communities, notably the queer community, people of color, and disabled individuals. The bill's provisions could enable discrimination under the guise of religious freedom. For instance, it might allow businesses to refuse services to queer individuals, or employers to discriminate against people of color or those with disabilities, based on religious beliefs. This directly undermines the principles of equality and justice. As an advocate for inclusive rights, I am deeply concerned about the bill's vague language, which lacks safeguards against misuse. This ambiguity opens avenues for justifying discriminatory practices, further marginalizing vulnerable groups. In my experience within these communities, such legislation not only perpetuates existing inequalities but also erodes the hardearned progress towards equal rights and recognition. The right to freedom of religion is crucial, but it should not infringe upon other fundamental rights. This bill threatens the balance necessary for a diverse and inclusive society. I urge you to consider its broader implications and oppose its passage.

Name: Heather Flory

Comment: I strongly oppose HSB 614. Please do not allow Iowans to discriminate against other Iowans based on religion. Let's all work towards helping each other instead of hating each other.

Name: Melanie Distler

Comment: I am in opposition of this bill. I honestly cant believe in the year 2024, we are, in the land of the free, rolling back the rights of humans. Humans that just want what we all want, to be happy. Instead were promoting hate, disguised by religion. Stop this bill!

Name: Madeline Ehlinger

Comment: There is a reason that we are a democracy and not a theocracy. Separation of church and state is imperative and believed to be important by our founding fathers. Ones religion should not allow them a free pass to discriminate against others. I am firmly against this bill and honestly disgusted that it has even been introduced.

Name: Teresa Grooms

Comment: Separation of church and State. You all swore an oath to up hold the law. Quit pandering to to people who feel the need to discriminate against people.

Name: Storm O'Brink

Comment: Oppose this bill. Religion has no place in government, and allowing people to pick and choose what laws they abide by on the basis of religion does immense harm to our community. This will yield consequences that were not intended by the people who introduced this bill.

Name: Tom Gruis

Comment: This bill seems like it could have severe, negative, unintended consequences for Iowa and its local governments. Please, don't support this bill.

Name: Danetta Dobre

Comment: I strongly oppose this bill. I am not sure why this is even being considered religious beliefs, even sincerely held ones, should never supersede the basic fundamental rights of another. I am especially concerned that this will be used by dishonest actors as a hall pass to freely discriminate against LGBTQ individuals, people of color, and immigrants. Do not support this bill Iowans deserve better.

Name: Katharine Linder

Comment: I urge you to oppose this bill. It poses a threat to marginalized communities, notably the LGBTQ+ community, people of color, and disabled individuals. While freedom of religion is important, it should not impinge on others rights.

Name: Carl Olsen

Comment: The federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) was passed by Congress in 1993 and applied to both the federal government and the states. It was passed in response to a U.S. Supreme Court decision denying religious protection for a Schedule I controlled substance, peyote, because federal regulations included an exemption for religious use of peyote since 1966, and the state of Oregon did not allow it. I am mentioned frequently in that U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Employment Division v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872 (1990), so I know quite a lot about it. My case was *Olsen v. DEA*, 878 F.2d 1458 (D.C. Cir. 1989). The United States Supreme Court struck the application of RFRA to the states in 1997, in *Boerne v. Flores*, 521 U.S. 507 (1997), and that is why Senate File 2095 has been introduced. States have been enacting these state versions of RFRA since 1997 when the Supreme Court struck it down as applied to the states. *Boerne v. Flores*, just as *Employment Division v. Smith*, protects state sovereignty, "states' rights" as it is sometime called, or "federalism." Of course, my case was about marijuana and not one state accepted the use of marijuana for anything until 1996 when California authorized home grown and group cultivation for medical use. A lot has changed since 1989 when I lost my case, and I'd like a second opportunity to bring that challenge again. SF 2095 would give me that opportunity. Iowa Code 124.204(8) is the Iowa exception for the religious use of peyote, and it was first adopted in Iowa in 1967, 1967 Acts, ch. 189, 2(12), Iowa Code 204A.2(12) (1968), immediately following the federal exception in 1966, Federal Register, Vol. 31, No. 54 Saturday, March 19, 1966, at page 4679. An exception for one church and one church alone for which no others can apply violates our state constitution. Iowa Const., art. 1, 1 (equality), 3 (religious neutrality), 6 (uniformity), 9 (due process), and 20 (redress). SF 2095 would cure that by providing due process, equality, religious neutrality, uniformity, and redress. Thank you!

Name: Jamie Nicolino

Comment: As a Des Moines resident and small business owner I urge you to reconsider passing this dangerous bill as it allows folks to weaponize their religion by openly discriminating. Passing bills to allow for discrimination and hate of any kind is NOT okay. It is bills like this that make folks reconsider moving to our state because of the direct harm they can cause. We must do better.

Name: Itzel Gallegos-Martinez

Comment: I strongly oppose HSB 614. What it implies is very dangerous. Separate religion and state.

Name: Dana Slotter

Comment: I am writing in opposition to this bill. We live in a secular society, which should allow for every possible way for being a person, no matter your personal beliefs

about it. Your religion is your business, but it should not be used as a weapon against people whose existence does not gel with your opinions on how to live. Please vote this hateful, discriminatory legislation down.

Name: Michael De Sotel-Chesmore

Comment: I urge you to vote no against HSB 614. To be able to discriminate someone on account of who they are is inhumane. Religion is not a tool for hate. For it was said in Leviticus 19:18, "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD." Religion should not be a place for condemning another out of a place to live, be served care, or be offered a service. Religion should remain in the churches, temples, mosques, synagogues, etc. and the state should remain in the state. Thank you for your time.

Name: Abby Batterson

Comment: I strongly oppose this bill. Church and state are separate and mixing the two can be incredible dangerous when looking at law. Please do not allow this to go through. It will do so much damage and our state can't take much more.

Name: Gwyn Bertocki

Comment: I strongly oppose this bill! It is simply a way to allow people to discriminate based on personal beliefs, which will only result in chaos and possibly violence. We are a country of many faiths (and even questioning faith or no faith at all), and the separation of church and state that mutual respect is key to our success. A bill like this only gives people free rein to hate and harm. We should not be protecting this kind of behavior by allowing them to say their religious beliefs allow it. Everyone should be protected under the law not just a handful of angry, closed minded churchgoers who fear those who are different. Iowans deserve better.

Name: Courtney Collier

Comment: I support HSB 614.

Name: Sara Wilkins Barnes

Comment: I do not support this bill.

Name: Jayde Taylor

Comment: Christianity does not teach to discriminate, nor does any religion. Claiming Christianity or any other religion as a reason to discriminate works in opposition to the holy texts, which should nullify any basis of "religious freedom" this is not a bill about religion this is a bill made to further grow a divide within Iowa.

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Name: Justin Comer

Comment: Oppose this bill. We do not need to encourage more discrimination in the guise of religious freedom.

Name: Kelly McConnell

Comment: I believe this bill is appalling and we should not even be considering it in 2024. Allowing religion to discriminate is a very slippery slope. Does that allow Muslims to deny services to Christians because their religion tells them that eating pork makes you unclean. Could a protestant refuse service to an evangelical because they don't follow Christ the same way. Where would it stop and who determines what is a deeply held religious belief. If you do not wish to serve people who do not follow

your religion then don't do business. This country was founded on the freedom of religion. This means that the government can not impose a religion on to you or prevent you from practicing the religion of your choice. It does not mean that you get to use your right to practice your religion as a way to discriminate against others based on their right to practice the way they choose. Jesus was welcoming to all and did not discriminate why are we using his name to discriminate now. This is truly a very sad day for Iowa.

Name: Carol Johnk

Comment: This bill weaponizes a person's hate and fear. For those of us with LGBTQ+ family members I assert they are human beings who have not chosen to be LGBTQ+ will be demonized and treated as less valuable. It is no one's business what another's sexual orientation is. Please vote against this hateful bill.

Name: Jess Bierling

Comment: I strongly oppose this bill. People have the right to practice whatever religion they follow, but they should not be able to use their religion to harm or remove anyone else from society. I don't expect you would agree with businesses turning away people who wore crosses. There is a reason the United States Constitution included the first amendment.

Name: Lindsay Mack

Comment: I vehemently oppose HSB 614 as it poses a significant threat to the crucial separation of church and state, a fundamental principle in our nation's history. Granting individuals the right to discriminate based on protected classes, including gender, gender identity, expression, pregnancy, sexual orientation, and religion, is an affront to the principles of equality and tolerance that our country upholds. This bill risks enabling discrimination under the guise of religious freedom, allowing individuals, businesses, and legal entities to unjustly harm vulnerable Iowans. I implore you to reject HSB 614 and stand against any legislation that undermines the principles of equal treatment under the law. The potential consequences of legalizing discrimination based on religious beliefs are far-reaching and must not be tolerated in our state.

Name: Matt Wells

Comment: The individual right to live one's faith out is paramount to a society remaining free. The rights of individuals to gather in the name of religion is also paramount. Government should never get in the way of these natural rights. I urge the passage of this bill.

Name: Allison Bielenberg

Comment: I strongly oppose this bill. Everyone has the right to practice religion, but they should not be able to use their religion to harm or discriminate against another. If this bill passes, that is exactly what will happen. Let's work to make Iowa a more safe and accepting place help EVERYONE, not some.

Name: Bailey Jenson

Comment: I strongly oppose HSB 614. Please do not allow Iowans to discriminate against other Iowans based on religion. Let's all work towards helping each other instead of hating each other.

Name: Andrew Hughes

Comment: Bill HSB614 will simply allow bigotry and discrimination under the guise of religious beliefs. This will actively harm our neighbors in the LGBTQ+ community in Iowa. Do not pass this bill.

Name: Amy Meyer

Comment: I support this bill. The free exercise of religion must be protected as an inalienable

right of Iowans.

Name: Oli Rowling

Comment: I do not support this bill and neither does the rest of my community. I already know so many queer folks that struggle to find housing and safe places to live. It is absolutely insane that in 2024 we have to beg for our rights and beg for religious beliefs to not control our livelihood. This bill is incredibly harmful please do not pass this.

Name: Travis Reed

Comment: I strongly oppose this bill. This bill only supports hate that does not belong in the state of Iowa! If a business doesnt want to be open to the public they shouldnt exist in Iowas economy.

Name: Wendy Hanson

Comment: I oppose this bill and urge you to do the same

Name: Clayton Bunch

Comment: I oppose this bill. Its allowing small businesses to discriminate.

Name: Dustin Reese

Comment: I strongly oppose this bill, for a multitude of reasons. I will highlight a few below. First, the goal for this legislative session, and the past few has been focusing on unemployment numbers, and their reduction to the point seasonal and construction workers are often denied unemployment over winter now. Suddenly you add a bill that allows people to be terminated for no real reason and that number could and would sky rocket. Thus defeating the sacrifices made to that low number. Second, as a public servant law makers take an oath to serve all the people of Iowa, not a fraction of them. You cannot serve only the 61% of Christians who reside in the state. The other 49% matter as well. Out of 2,400+ sovereign religions practiced in this state you owe it to every one of them to respect differences and diversity. Wasnt it the Christian God who COMMANDED you to love thy neighbor? That incides the neighbors who are different than you. Third, every tax painting citizen of this state deserves the same respect, courtesy, and protection. Every one of them is paying to keep the state afloat, and law makers salaries. Fourth, this entire country was founded on the basis of freedom from religious persecution. That also applies to the other 2,399+ religions. Allowing a Christian employer to terminate someone because they are Muslim, Jewish, etc. is in fact religious persecution. Therefore you are shaking the foundations this country was built on. I understand what this bill does on the surface level, but what about the true repercussions? Young people are FLEEING this great state in mass numbers and you want to add yet another undesirable facet that people under the age of 45 will hate? Youre doing your jobs WRONG!

Name: Kristin Pruitt

Comment: This is ridiculous. This should not be passed. People will take advantage of this, and this will cause so many issues. There should a separation of church and state. Stop being religious matters into law. Iowa is becoming a joke of a state. How freaking embarrassing . You should all be ashamed to even consider this!!!

Name: Elizabeth VanCamp

Comment: The idea that people can pick and choose who to treat fairly and equitably because of their religious beliefs is perplexing. Im very confused on how this is even a discussion as were supposed to keep church and state separate. How does a separation exist if the government is sanctioning basing law and order and/or prejudice on religious beliefs?

