

**Testimony of Rev. Dr. David M. Krueger Before the Senate Labor Committee in Harrisburg, PA
on 8-30-2016**

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Senate Labor Committee today. I'm speaking in favor of a law that would protect vulnerable sexual minorities from discrimination. Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender persons are at risk in the workplace and are in need of employment protections.

I stand in support of these protections as a person of Christian faith. When I read the scriptures, I encounter Jesus who stood with those at the margins society: the woman who was about to be stoned for adultery, the Samaritans who were labeled impure and immoral. He stood against a religious system that marked some people as outsiders and unfit in the eyes of God. In Luke chapter 4 we read that Jesus preached good news to the poor and called for the oppressed to be set free. In short, Christian faith, as embodied in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, is a faith that demands justice.

My own denomination, the United Methodist Church, is deeply conflicted about the role of LGBT persons in the church. Although our church policies have not changed, United Methodist congregants disagree over the ordination of lesbian and gay persons and whether or not clergy can conduct same-sex marriages. But despite these differences, United Methodists in Eastern Pennsylvania have found common ground. In 2014, our conference, made up of 417 churches and 104,000 members, voted to support SB/HB 300, which sought to protect LGBT persons from discrimination in housing and employment. Through passing this resolution, we recognize that despite our theological differences about the role of LGBT persons in the church, we agree that LGBT persons deserved protection when it comes where they live and where they work.

To be clear, I am sympathetic to some of the reasons that a person might oppose Senate Bill 1306. Allow me to explain. We live in Pennsylvania, a commonwealth founded by the Quaker William Penn as a haven for religious minorities. As a historian, I know that Pennsylvania's example of religious freedom was instrumental in shaping the U.S. Constitution's understanding of religious freedom. The First Amendment prohibits government from favoring one religion over another (non-establishment) and guarantees the right for religious people to freely exercise their faith. These are rights that we hold sacred.

Some may argue that the freedom to fire a person on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity is a right protected by free exercise clause of the First Amendment. They are arguing that religious people ought to be given special accommodation to discriminate. However, as the courts have always ruled, accommodations to religious groups need to be considered in the context of how they impact others.

Terminating the employment of a person due their sexual orientation or gender identity causes tremendous suffering to vulnerable Pennsylvanians. As a person of sincerely-held religious beliefs, I speak against any law that brings economic hardship to residents of our commonwealth.

In sum, I do not believe that supporting SB 1306 will threaten the constitutional rights of religious persons. Furthermore, I do believe that this bill affirms some of the important virtues of the Christian

faith: justice, equality, dignity. Christians are always going to disagree about how certain Bible verses should be interpreted, they'll disagree about whether baptisms should involve dunking or sprinkling, and they'll even disagree about the color of the carpet in the church sanctuary. But what we ought to agree on is this: that Pennsylvanians ought to be able to go to work without fear of losing their jobs because of who they are or who they love.