

AUGUST 22, 2016

**TO THE PENNSYLVANIA SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND INDUSTRY  
CONCERNING SB 1306**

My name is Donn Chapman; I am the Senior Pastor of Cornerstone Ministries in Murrysville, Pennsylvania. I am writing today in regard to Senate Bill 1306. I am asking that our freedom of religion with regard to hiring of employees who share our faith and live out that faith, not be taken from us. A Church is a community of shared values and beliefs. It is how we live out Jesus's call on our lives, according to the Bible, God's Word. We hold each other accountable to not only believing God's Word, but to living it out each day.

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Act applies to this church, which has more than four employees, but as you know, we are a religious organization and may hire all employees on religious grounds. But SB 1306 will remove our right to hire all of our employees on the basis of whether they believe church teaching and live their lives consistent with that teaching when it comes to important issues of our faith on marriage and sexuality.

It would appear to me that proponents of applying this bill to churches and religious organizations would like to assume that a clear line can be drawn between the ministerial staff and the other employees of the church. Or that they maybe assume the government or a judge should decide which of our employees need not believe what the church teaches and need not live consistent with those teachings. This is not the case. One of the principles of the Bible as we understand it is the priesthood of all believers. This is the concept that all believers have direct access to God through Jesus Christ. While the ministerial staff leads and guides the church, all members are tasked with fulfilling the great commission. They are called to pray with each other as well as others, counsel them, and live consistent with church teaching. Based on this shared belief, for example, when a call comes in to our front office from a person in distress or someone merely drops by, our employees are expected not only to schedule an appointment with a counselor in the Caring Department, but to also pray with that person. It is essential to our religious freedom that we can hire every one of our employees on the basis of whether they share our faith and live out that faith.

In our onsite Café, to give another example, there is a notebook that is kept for all of the volunteers in the Café. Each week prayer requests are shared by those working there, and when the prayers are answered that is recorded as well. Our volunteers and employees are sharing not only food service, but a life of faith lived out together. We need to maintain the freedom to continue that shared life of faith.

If I could offer one more example why it is essential that we be able to hire persons based on the employee's religious beliefs and adherence to those beliefs for all positions, we had an exceptional young man in our ministry who showed a high level of aptitude in working with sound and video. Our head sound man began to mentor him, and for several years he would work as an intern in the summer months. That mentoring involved not only technical training, but Bible study and prayer as well.

I could give several other examples, but I would end with a plea. It was for religious freedom that our forefathers came to America. I believe that SB1306 would rob us of that first and fundamental freedom. Please do not put the church in a position of having to obey God rather than man made laws.

Dr. Donn S. Chapman, Senior Pastor

2200 Cornerstone Lane • Murrysville, PA 15632 • P: 724.733.0070 F: 724.733.5458 • [www.cornerstonelive.net](http://www.cornerstonelive.net)