

Exhibit J

Joey Songy

From: Jameson Taylor <taylor@mspolicy.org>
Sent: Monday, March 28, 2016 5:03 PM
To: Drew Snyder; Joey Songy; Knox Graham
Subject: letters of support for HB 1523, in case you are asked, "Who in MS wants this?"
Attachments: HomeofGrace_Ltr-Reeves-Senators-Support HB 1523.pdf; Bethany_LetterLtGov.pdf; HB 1523_CatholicBishops.pdf; NewBeginnings_LetterLTGov.pdf; UPC_Letter.pdf; HB1523 AFA Letter to Lt Gov.pdf; HB 1523_ADF_LegalMemo.pdf

Gentlemen:

I hope you are having a blessed Easter!

I wanted to make you are aware of the letters of support for HB 1523, in the event you are asked by the media: "Who wants this?"

Of course, clerks and others have also asked for similar protections and met with the Speaker toward that end.

These letters are from adoption agencies, the two Catholic bishops, Home of Grace, etc. There are many, many more letters of support from individual pastors. Stacks of letters (too many to attach here).

I also attach a legal analysis from ADF. Here, also, are two points you should be aware of:

This bill is narrowly, not broadly tailored. For instance, it does NOT authorize discrimination against homosexuals as a class of people. It does allow businesses and government officials to decline to participate in a marriage ceremony or celebration.

Circuit clerks must provide a way for a marriage license to be issued, even if there are no employees in the clerk's office who are willing to sign one. The clerk is allowed to recuse himself or herself only if doing so would not delay the issuance of the license. If the clerk wanted to, he or she could have an agreement with a local attorney (or any local citizen, I suppose) to be a deputy clerk solely on those occasions when a marriage license is applied for by a same-sex couple.

All the best, Jameson

PS – Also, you may have seen this:

<http://www.clarionledger.com/story/opinion/columnists/2016/03/25/support-mississippi-house-bill-1523-larry-mcadoo/82259908/>

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www.msolicy.org
www.governingbyprinciple.org
www.seethespending.org

Limited Government • Free Markets • Strong Traditional Families

"This is our city! And nobody gonna dictate our freedom. Stay strong."

--David Ortiz



Admin Office and Men's Campus
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Women's Campus
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Gautler, Mississippi 39553
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March 25, 2016

Dear Gov. Reeves and Mississippi Senators:

We at the Home of Grace urge you to defend freedom of conscience and the free exercise of religion by voting YES on HB 1523: "Protecting Freedom of Conscience from Government Discrimination Act," which now awaits Senate action.

Mississippi needs this bill because when the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, created a constitutionally protected right to same-sex marriage in every state, their ruling failed to protect people of faith and faith-based, 501(c)3 entities.

HB 1523 will prevent Mississippi churches and other religious organizations like the Home of Grace from potentially losing their tax exempt status under state law. It will also protect faith-based adoption agencies from government discrimination if the agency places children only in homes of a mother and father. It will protect our schools, our businesses, and our public employees from government discrimination and intimidation.

HB 1523 does not in any way question or undermine what the Supreme Court ruled regarding same-sex marriage. However, our country has a long tradition of protecting conscience rights when accommodation can be made between those rights and the law. An example of this are the conscience protections for medical professionals and pharmacists enacted by many states after the *Roe v. Wade* decision.

Again, I urge you to vote yes on HB1523 and protect people of faith all across Mississippi so that we may continue to serve in our communities and live out our faith without fear of harassment by government agencies or officials.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Josh D. Barton".

Josh D. Barton
Executive Director

JDB/ab



March 2, 2016

Lt. Governor Tate Reeves
Members of the Mississippi Senate
P.O. Box 1018
Jackson, MS 39215

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of Bethany Christian Services, I appreciate the opportunity to offer my support for HB 1523 that is now before the Mississippi legislature.

Bethany Christian Services is a global nonprofit organization that brings families together and keeps families together. Working privately and with local, state, and federal governments in 36 states and 19 countries, Bethany Christian Services has been finding loving families for and serving the needs of more than 100,000 children every single year. For more than half a century, Bethany has partnered with governments to find loving and nurturing homes for children and to help the neediest in our communities. In addition, Bethany raises millions of dollars each year from private donors to supplement the work we do with governments.

We at Bethany are compelled by our faith to serve, and we adhere to the values and beliefs of our faith when serving. Indeed, faith-based agencies have been serving children and families in this country long before the creation of governmental social-service agencies. That is why governments across the country regularly pursue initiatives to form stronger public-private partnerships with faith-based agencies. It cannot be seriously disputed that children and families are best served when governments partner with faith-based agencies to maximize the available resources.

Unfortunately, it is that faith which is now under attack, with some state and local governments taking the position that faith-based agencies must choose between their desire to help children and families and their fidelity to their religious principles. In Massachusetts, Washington D.C., and Illinois, numerous child-placement agencies either had to abandon their faith or abandon the children they serve. That is an untenable choice and one that inevitably results in fewer resources available to recruit families and place children in loving homes.

In 2012, a Virginia regulatory agency attempted to do the same thing. Fortunately, the Virginia legislature acted swiftly to prohibit the agency's actions by passing legislation protecting the consciences of faith-based agencies when those agencies provide much-needed services to children and families. In addition, similar legislation was passed in Michigan in 2015.

This legislation largely codifies the current practice across the nation of honoring the consciences of faith-based agencies while at the same time ensuring that every person who is legally able to participate in adoption and foster care will be able to do so. It's a practical solution to working with private agencies because it strikes a balance—it ensures that there are private agencies available to work with *all* individuals and families throughout the state while allowing faith-based agencies to adhere to their religious principles. Under the system, a state

partners with dozens of private agencies that will work with any individual or family statewide. Then, in addition to those agencies, the state accepts assistance from agencies that have more focused efforts. The state does not get into the business of endorsing a particular religious or moral view. Rather, the state's system allows every agency to recruit families consistent with their missions so that more children can be placed in loving homes. By maximizing the available resources, the system is in the best interest of children and families and prevents any government entanglement in religion.

In many cases, the choice of an agency is deeply personal and faith-based. We can verify that many of the families that Bethany recruits work with Bethany *because of our faith* commitment. Indeed, religion is an important factor in determining what is in the "best interest of the child."¹ So serving the best interests of children and families many times requires the state to seek assistance from the faith-based community. Those who would argue that a faith-based agency must continue to provide services even when the services would require the agency to abandon its beliefs do not understand the exercise of religion. Indeed, if this type of protective legislation is not enacted in a state, agencies such as Bethany face much uncertainty in deciding whether to work in that state, especially considering what has happened across the country already.

The protection of agencies' consciences in the legislation does not judge or adopt a particular belief about family structure or lifestyle. Rather, HB 1523 simply ensure that faith-based agencies may adhere to their particular beliefs when providing services that have been essential to helping children and families throughout our nation's history. This is a vital notion in our pluralistic country: The ability and freedom of Americans of any faith—or no faith at all—to be free to serve the needy in ways consistent with the commitments that inspire their service in the first place. Although not everyone may agree with all the aspects of each other's beliefs on family structure, the truth is that religious beliefs compel individuals and organizations to help place children in loving homes. And this is something everyone can agree with and support.

We ask that you and your colleagues in the Mississippi legislature support common-sense legislation that has been passed in other states protecting the religious liberty of child-welfare agencies so that they may continue to partner with governments and work privately to serve children and families.

Sincerely,



Karen P. Stewart
Branch Director
Bethany Christian Services of Mississippi

¹ Mich. Comp. Laws § 710.22; *see, e.g.*, N.Y. Const. Art. 6, § 32; N.Y. Social Services Law § 373; Mont. Code Ann. § 42-4-201.



**The Catholic Diocese
of Jackson**

237 East Amite Street
Jackson, MS 39201

•
Most Reverend Joseph R. Kopacz, D.D.
Bishop



**The Catholic Diocese
of Biloxi**

1790 Popps Ferry Road
Biloxi, MS 39532

•
Most Reverend Roger P. Morin, D.D.
Bishop

March 1, 2016

We, the undersigned, Most Reverend Joseph R. Kopacz, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Jackson, and Most Reverend Roger P. Morin, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Biloxi, are writing on behalf of the Catholic Church throughout Mississippi with regard to HB 1523. This bill seeks to encode in State law the right to freedom of conscience and protections to religious individuals and groups. We are concerned that without this protection our mission to serve in a manner that is faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Church's cherished tradition to educate, and to serve society's vulnerable populations, will be in jeopardy.

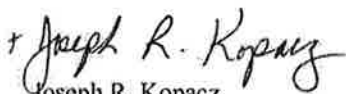
Our Catholic Charities are very active in the areas of adoption, foster care, and unaccompanied refugee minors. These programs provide a critical service to children and families throughout the State of Mississippi. It is our hope that we can continue to serve those in need, while at the same time be faithful to our mission through the placing of these children with parents in traditional marriages, male and female. It would be detrimental to our Church's mission, as well as to the common good of our State, to be compelled to choose between our beliefs and our service.


Likewise, our Catholic School System throughout Mississippi has a stellar reputation for education that reaches back before the Civil War. Our teachers provide a first rate education to Catholics and to students of all faith traditions. Moreover, our educators are also ministers of the gospel who witness to the teachings, beliefs, and values of the Church that have their origin in the words of Jesus Christ to go and teach all nations. It is our hope that we can safeguard this cherished mission that has been a wellspring of life for the Church and for the population of Mississippi, without prejudice, for 169 years.

As you weigh whether or not to vote in support of HB 1523, it is important that you do so with knowledge of what the bill actually does, and not with the distorted, inaccurate claims from the bill's opponents. It is our opinion that HB 1523 does not violate the Free Speech, Establishment, or Equal Protection Clauses of our Constitution. In fact, laws that afford similar protections to religious individuals and groups have been repeatedly upheld by the Supreme Court. Thus, the legislature would be acting consistent with the protections guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution if it passed HB 1523.

We thank you for your attention to this critical bill that is before you. May the Holy Spirit enlighten your deliberations and decisions to choose wisely on behalf of the people of Mississippi.

Respectfully yours,


Joseph R. Kopacz
Bishop of Jackson


Roger P. Morin
Bishop of Biloxi



P.O. Box 1188, Raymond, MS 39154-1188 Phone: 601-857-5532 Fax: 601-857-2635

David D. Tipton, Jr.
District Superintendent

Dennis M. Davis
District Secretary/Treasurer

March 2, 2016

The Honorable J. Tate Reeves
Lt. Governor of the State of Mississippi
PO Box 1018
Jackson, MS 39215

Lt. Governor Reeves,

Mississippi is one of, if not the most, faith-minded states in America. In fact, Barna Research Group named Jackson, Mississippi as the fifth most faith-minded city in the nation. It is no wonder that your courage and support for HB1523, the MS Government Non-Discrimination Act has been applauded by the MS religious community.

On behalf of thousands of Mississippi pastors, ministers and church members, I extend a heartfelt thank you for your leadership and commitment to religious freedom. Because we cannot count on the Supreme Court to uphold the rights of its citizens of faith and the fact that we live in a litigious society, it is imperative that we protect Mississippians freedom of conscience.

We have arrived at a defining moment in our state. We know that you have chosen to stand with a great multitude of Mississippians who support this bill rather than capitulate to the outside pressure of those who are seeking to undermine our foundation of religious freedom in Mississippi. By helping to pass HB1523 you will ensure that churches across this state maintain their ability to preach and live out their faith in a manner that is consistent with their sincerely held religious beliefs.

This is the most significant piece of legislation the people of Mississippi are watching. We are confident that you have the courage to lead on this important issue. Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

Ron Matis
Political Director
Mississippi District UPC



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March 3, 2016

Honorable Lt. Gov. Tate Reeves,

The American Family Association (AFA) is a 501(c)3 nationally recognized, Christian organization based in Tupelo, MS, and our mission is to preserve the moral integrity of marriage and family in America. Since our founding in 1977, AFA has been able to freely exercise its religious belief without fear of government penalty. We are grateful for this foundational, constitutional freedom that has enabled us to encourage those who share our beliefs and convictions on marriage, family, and human sexuality.

These freedoms are under assault, however. Courts across America are pressuring individuals and organizations to endorse same-sex marriage and gender related viewpoints. These types of assault will likely only increase since the U.S. Supreme Court in *Obergefell v. Hodges* created a constitutionally protected right to same-sex marriage in every state. The problem with their ruling is that it failed to protect people and entities who hold religious beliefs on marriage and sexuality that conflict with the government's enforcement of the right to same-sex marriage.

The threat that organizations like AFA might lose their tax-exempt status is a real possibility given the *Obergefell* decision. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito asked the U.S. solicitor general during oral arguments how tax-exempt religious institutions might be affected by the decision. The solicitor general responded: "It's certainly going to be an issue. I don't deny that." This response from the nation's top lawyer is one reason AFA strongly supports HB 1523, the Protecting Freedom of Conscience from Government Discrimination Act.

HB1523 prevents state and local governments from violating the conscience of individuals or entities like AFA for affirming marriage and sexual relations being only between a man and a woman. This bill also protects a person's conscience from state and local government discrimination if they affirm sexual identity as being biologically fixed at birth.

This bill will furthermore protect faith-based adoption agencies from government discrimination if the agency places children only in homes of a mother and father. Religious schools and other non-profit religious groups, like AFA, will also be protected from the governmental threat of losing their tax-exempt status.

We recognize and appreciate your strong leadership in passing the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). AFA hopes that under your leadership the MS State Senate will further recognize the vulnerability of non-profit, religious organizations and pass laws that protect them.

Sincerely,

Tim Wildmon