MAINSTREAM

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Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs
Sen Mike Thompson, Chair

Neutral Testimony, Verbal, In Person

SB520–Creating the crime of interference with the conduct of a religious assembly

Chair Thompson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide neutral testimony on SB520.

Mainstream was founded over 30 years ago by faith and community leaders who warned about the intrusion of narrow, extremist religious views into our government and public institutions. In the following decades, Mainstream members have fought to protect our religious freedoms and maintain strong church-state separation because Kansans value their freedom to live as they see fit without the overreach of government or religion into their personal lives.

The Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment guarantees the right for all to practice their religion without undue government intervention. This is a sacred right and Mainstream supports this legislature in protecting religious freedom for all.

The First Amendment also guarantees the freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and protests. This legislature has prioritized protecting free speech this session, even when that speech is controversial.

We encourage this body to balance these protections when considering the contents of SB520. Current statute protects religious freedom and religious assembly under the definition of disorderly conduct (K.S.A. 21-6203[1]**)** and the Kansas Preservation of Religious Freedom Act (K.S.A. 60-5301-5305[2]). We ask that the penalty for interference with religious assembly, and specifically subsection (a)(1), match current state statute as a misdemeanor rather than a

[1] K.S.A. 21-6203, Disorderly conduct, https://ksrevisor.gov/statutes/chapters/ch21/021_062_0003.html
[2] K.S.A. 60-5301-5305, Kansas Preservation of Religious Freedom Act, https://www.ksrevisor.gov/statutes/chapters/ch60/060_053_0001.html

felony. We also ask that new section 2(d) be removed and jurisdiction remain under state municipal or district courts.

Religious spaces should be protected from those who wish to cause harm and injury, but they are also spaces for disagreement and open dialogue. Please protect both in SB520.

Thank you,

Laurel Burchfield
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