



Central States Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Date: March 12, 2024

To: House Judiciary Committee

From: Rev. Susan Candea, Bishop

Central States Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

RE: HB2300 Bill, opposed to section G (page 2, line 8)

Dear Committee Members,

I commend you for a bill that requires mandatory reporting regarding child abuse. Thank you for making the care and safety of our children a priority. This is such an important responsibility for a society, to care for our children. I am heartened to live in a state that is so committed to the welfare of our children, who from my faith tradition, are God's beloved.

I am, however, opposed to the exception made to ordained clergy on page 2, line 8 (section G). This section gives an exception for ordained ministers in order to protect "penitential communication." I have been an ordained minister for over 40 years and the confidentiality of the office of confession can and must be broken if there is knowledge of abuse or neglect of a child. As the bishop, overseeing the ministry of 150 congregations across Kansas and Missouri, that is the advice and counsel I give to the pastors serving on the roster of my synod.

The protection of children outweighs the rights of an individual to use the penitential office to assuage their guilt without addressing their behavior. As the church and as a society, we are called to protect the most vulnerable. I therefore urge you not to make such an exception for ordained minister but recognize that we all have the responsibility to make sure our children are safe.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Susan Candea, Bishop

God's work. Our hands.

420 W 14th St., Suite 101 • Kansas City, MO 64105 • 913.948.9701 • 866.915.3548 (toll-free) • www.css-elca.org