



PO Box 654
Lawrence, KS 66044

KansasInterfaithAction.org
KIFA@kansasinterfaithaction.org

Rabbi Moti Rieber, Executive Director
Rev. Dr. Annie Ricker, Board Chair

Testimony by Rabbi Moti Rieber in Opposition to SB419, Enacting the Kansas intellectual rights and knowledge act (Charlie Kirk bill)

Senate Committee on Education, Sen. Renee Erickson, chair - Feb. 4, 2026

Mme. Chair, Members of the Committee:

I serve as Executive Director for Kansas Interfaith Action, a statewide, multifaith issue-advocacy organization that “puts faith into action” on a variety of important social and economic justice issues. We work with many of the mainline denominations in Kansas, including the local judicatories of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the United Church of Christ (UCC), and the United Methodist Church (UMC), and with hundreds of congregations and thousands of people of faith in Kansas. I rise today in opposition to HB 2495.

When I look at the first page of this bill, this hagiography of Charlie Kirk, I note with astonishment the distance between these quasi-religious claims and the public person this legislation intends to sanctify. I’m going to read a couple of quotes from the man himself, even if it might trigger the Senate president. I am attaching an article that fact-checks these quotes, and you will see that they are accurate and in context.¹ It’s important to get these into the public record.

- He approvingly cited an interpretation of Leviticus 19 calling for gay people to be stoned to death.
- He said, “If I see a black pilot, I’m going to be like, boy, I hope he’s qualified.”
- He called for “a patriot” to bail out the attacker of Nancy Pelosi’s husband – important to note due to the mention of political violence in this bill.
- He said that Joy Reid, Michelle Obama, and Supreme Court justice Ketanji Brown Jackson were “affirmative action picks,” and that “[B]lack women do not have brain processing power to be otherwise taken really seriously” and “You have to go steal a white person slot to be taken somewhat seriously.”
- He said, many times, that Martin Luther King Jr. was an awful person who should not be honored.
- He supported the explicitly White Supremacist Great Replacement Theory (made famous in Charlottesville), the idea that Democrats (or Jews) bring in immigrants to replace white people.
- He said that vaccine requirements are “medical apartheid.”
- He said that women’s natural place is under their husband’s control, specifically telling Taylor Swift to “reject feminism. Submit to your husband, Taylor. You’re not in charge.”
- He called George Floyd “a scumbag” and that the January 6 Capitol rioters were persecuted patriots.
- He said that the 1964 Civil Rights Act was “a huge mistake.”
- He said that “Muslims only come to America to destabilize western civilization.”

These are all attested quotes - and there are many more.

¹ [“Fact-checking Charlie Kirk’s Awfulness”](#), by Erik Veland in End Times on Substack, Sept. 12, 2025.

As for his vaunted debating prowess: Charlie Kirk was a well-funded far right pundit who had a performative “debate” style which valued affect over substance. His technique relied on bullying, changing the subject, interruption and ridicule.

Charlie Kirk’s tactics weren’t real debate. Instead of following structured rules of argument, he relied on interruption, ridicule, and misdirection to dominate exchanges. ... By confronting undergraduates—often freshmen—Kirk created an unfair power imbalance that made his performances more about humiliation than discussion.²

He was effective in this setting, and his ideas gained wide traction. But being funded by billionaires to go around to college campuses to ridicule undergraduates does not make one a model of intellectual integrity.

He was, however, an advocate of one of the most powerful and dangerous ideologies in America today: White Christian Nationalism, defined as “an ideology that idealizes and advocates a fusion of American civic life with a particular type of Christian identity and culture.”³ That is, it uses the affect and symbols of Christianity in the service of a political project to remake the country.

And his Christianity was not recognizable to a lot of other Christian leaders. I’m linking to an article about Black pastors pushing back on the veneration of Kirk, including this quote from Rev. Howard-John Wesley, of Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, Virginia,

Charlie Kirk did not deserve to be assassinated... But I am overwhelmed seeing the flags of the United States of America at half-staff, calling this nation to honor and venerate a man who was an unapologetic racist and spent all of his life sowing seeds of division and hate into this land.⁴

And that leads us to SB 419. It’s not really “free speech” that this bill wants to promulgate, but the ability of Christian Nationalists to say whatever they want, free from limitation or consequences. We know this because of whose free speech isn’t being considered. We’re not seeing these righteous free speech advocates defend the free speech of advocates for Palestinian rights, which has been comprehensively and in some cases brutally suppressed on campuses. Last year a bill passed forcing college employees to take their pronouns out of their signatures – what about their free speech? Even now bills are going through this legislature that would suppress certain ideas under the umbrella term “DEI” – that’s free speech too.

I used to think that this was hypocrisy – “free speech for me but not for thee” – but now I recognize it as the raw exercise of power, and the fact that Christian Nationalists do not believe that other people have rights. We see both of these at play in the way SB 244 – a bill that puts into law a far-right Christian understanding of gender identity – was shoved through last week.

No, this bill is intended to use state power to force universities to privilege the free speech of Christian Nationalists, and only Christian Nationalists, to force hate speech – racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, anti-Islam, the kind of speech that Charlie Kirk was famous for – into all of our universities, under the guise of free speech and freedom of religion.

² “Charlie Kirk’s “Debate” Wasn’t Debate—It Was Bullying”, by Sophia Landauer, UOMOD.com, Sept. 22, 2025.

³ [“What is Christian Nationalism”](#), Christians Against Christian Nationalism website

⁴ [“Black church leaders reject Charlie Kirk martyrdom and point to his race rhetoric.”](#) By Aaron Morrison and Jaylen Green, apnews.com, September 24, 2025

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We live in a society with all kinds of people in it, and sometimes we make agreements that limit our free speech for the sake of allowing all of us into spaces. Protecting hate speech for people who identify as Christian – and only for them – makes all others second-class citizens.

Charlie Kirk died tragically, but the political uses to which his death has been put are disturbing and dangerous. Christian Nationalists don't need affirmative action, or for this legislature to give them special rights. I urge you to vote against SB419.