



KANSAS NOW

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To: Members of the House Judiciary Committee
FR: Kari Ann Rinker, M.P.A.
State Coordinator, Kansas NOW
RE: HB 2260, Opponent Testimony

Kansas NOW submits this testimony in strong opposition to HB 2260.

HB 2260 dubbed the "Kansas Preservation of Religious Freedom Act" seeks not to preserve freedom, but rather to deny freedom to those gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgendered Kansans that make our state their home. It seeks to amend K.S.A. 44-1001, a statute that exists to prevent and eliminate discrimination in employment, public accommodations and housing.

- *The attempt to amend this statute that stands as Kansas' commitment and dedication toward equality for all by offering an "opt out" sets bad precedent.*

As an organization that is dedicated to the rights, safety and full societal participation for women throughout Kansas, we strongly ask the committee to reject this proposed legislation, which should be considered a large stride backwards for human rights in Kansas. HB 2260 would only succeed in damaging the lives of citizens who wish to support themselves and their families by living, working and contributing within their communities.

Several Kansas communities have decided to make equality a priority by expanding their civil rights and non-discrimination ordinances to include protections for their LGBTQ citizens. Local governments should be free to make strides toward enabling their citizenry to flourish without worrying about the intervention of the state in their local affairs.

- *The State of Kansas should respect local sovereignty and not consider it their duty or privilege to revoke those existing protections or any future protections.*

The United States and the state of Kansas has within its history, undefined rights for many segments of society which resulted in sanctioned oppression and intimidation.

- *Today, the rights of LGBTQ citizens stand among those with undefined rights that in the past have included race, color and sex.*

The “Kansas Preservation of Religious Freedom Act” would allow employers and business owners to deny basic rights to a class of Kansas citizens in the name of “religious freedom”. This is the same excuse that has contributed to the continued subordination of women in our society. Religion should seek to be inclusive and not exclusive, it should seek to promote love and diversity, and never...ever should it be allowed to be used as a tool for discrimination.

Kansas NOW asks the House Judiciary Committee to strongly reject HB 2260.