



The LCMS Kansas District

Rev. Justin A. Panzer, District President

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March 12, 2024

To: Kansas House Judiciary Committee

Subject: HB 2300

Position: Neutral

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Justin Panzer, and I am the President of the Kansas District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. I am writing to you offer “neutral testimony” on HB 2300. The bill proposes requiring a duly ordained minister of religion to report certain abuse and neglect of children except when reporting would violate the penitential communication privilege.

I encourage you to read again the testimony that was offered by Rev. Dr. Jon Bruss, former pastor of St. John’s Lutheran Church (LCMS), Topeka, on March 13, 2019 in regards to SB 218 which is attached to this email. His testimony and letter serve as the basis for changes that have been made in HB 2300. I would like to quote to you again two paragraphs that Rev. Bruss wrote:

“We recognize that everyone has the responsibility to protect children from abuse and neglect. The reason for our testimony is to emphasize the importance of protecting the integrity of the confessional seal so that people feel free to confess their sins and can receive forgiveness.

When a LCMS pastor takes his ordination and installation vows, he promises before God and Church to “forgive the sins of those who repent” and “never to divulge the sins confessed to [him].” A pastor stands in the place of God when he hears confession, and he speaks and delivers to the penitent the forgiveness of sins won by Christ. We all have sins, and any amendment that would remove the protections for the confessional seal currently in the bill (SB 218) would make it more difficult to confess them to God through an ordained pastor. These principles of the penitential communication privilege are consistent with long-standing state law in K.S.A. 60-429.”

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Justin A. Panzer". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Rev. Justin A. Panzer, President
LCMS Kansas District