



Thursday, February 13, 2020

Mister Chair and members of the House State, Veterans, & Military Affairs Committee -

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Dorothy Jones and I am the Director of Public Affairs at the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce. I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Chamber, our 3,000 members and their 400,000 employees, to express our opposition of House Bill 1033.

But before I tell you more about why, I want to take a moment to talk about the message that continuing to introduce bills like this sends. Every year some form of this bill is introduced, even though it always faces overwhelming opposition from all sectors of our community and ultimately fails to move through the legislature.

At its core, this bill **corrupts and undermines** the First Amendment to the US Constitution by opening the door for any individual or business in Colorado to discriminate against any LGBTQ person because their religious beliefs give them the right to do so.

That's not ok in Colorado and it frankly shouldn't be ok anywhere else.

The very dangerous and divisive message that comes with this bill is one of lack of respect for others; it is one of intolerance; it is one of closed doors, rather than open doors; and it is counter to what so many **Coloradans believe**, which is that **people and perspectives and problem solving are more important than politics.**

There are high stakes with legislation like this. There are economic stakes – we saw what happened to Indiana in 2015 when it passed legislation like this. \$60 million in lost tourism revenue and a mass exodus of business leaders who saw that law for what it is – **discrimination**.

These anti-LGBTQ religious exemption laws are bad for local economies and bad for business. While proponents downplay the impact of their respective laws, economic experts say these laws are likely to inflict far-ranging damage, not only on LGBTQ customers and residents, but also on companies that operate there or are considering doing so.

But even more important than the economic impact, is the social impact. What we're saying when we introduce this kind of legislation is we don't want you, and we don't need you. That's absolutely not true. And it's absolutely not right.

That's not who we are. It's not how we do business and it's not the message we want to send to the nation and the world about Colorado.

Our state is better than laws designed to discriminate and we will never support legislation that creates an intolerant, anti-business environment.

The bottom line is that **Colorado RESPECTS FREEDOM OF RELIGION; Colorado DEFENDS AND PROTECTS THE RIGHTS OF OUR LGBTQ COMMUNITY; and Colorado is open for business to all**, regardless of who you are, how you worship or who you love.

Please vote no on HB20-1033 - Thank you.