



March 29, 2016

The Hon. Terry McAuliffe
Common Ground for Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

POFEV & Clergy Urge Veto of Senate Bill 41

Dear Governor McAuliffe:

We the undersigned clergy and Board members, on behalf of People of Faith for Equality in Virginia (POFEV), strongly urge you to veto Senate Bill 41, which would authorize individuals and businesses to discriminate against same-sex couples who are married or who seek to be married.

SB 41 attempts to solve a problem that does not exist. Clergy, individuals and religious institutions do not need any additional protection beyond that provided by the U.S. and Virginia Constitutions regarding a decision not to marry or host a wedding for any couple whom they do not believe is ready to be married or who does not meet the marriage requirements of their faith. Clergy are required to make these judgments regularly in their ministry and have never experienced or feared retaliation from the state for their decisions.

The real purpose of SB 41 is not to protect clergy and the religious institutions from coercive state power. The real purpose is to stigmatize lesbian and gay Virginians as deserving of a lesser status in the Commonwealth and to authorize private discrimination against them.

SB 41 goes well beyond creating a statutory right to refuse to solemnize a marriage. It also grants any organization of business engaging in public commerce and claiming a religious affiliation the right to discriminate against same-sex couples in virtually any context so long as the discrimination is rooted in the conviction that same-sex marriage is immoral. A conference center affiliated with a religious denomination or an inn being run intentionally on religious principles would have a statutory right to refuse to allow a married couple to stay. Its restaurant would have the right to refuse a married couple table service. A religious hospital could refuse to recognize the authority of a legally married spouse to determine care for an incapacitated partner.

No business or organization offering services to the public should be given a license to discriminate on the basis of those individuals' sexual orientation any more than given license to discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, disability, sex or gender. Granting such a right does not preserve any organization's or individual's liberty. It only deprives the victims of the discrimination of their rights and their dignity.

Please veto Senate Bill 41.

Sincerely,



John Humphrey, Chair of the Board, People of Faith for Equality in Virginia (POFEV)

Paula Prettyman, Member of the Board, POFEV

Reverend Marty Anderson, Pastor, Commonwealth Baptist Church, Alexandria

Reverend Robin Anderson, Pastor, Commonwealth Baptist Church, Alexandria

Rev. Allie Rosner Bass, Arlington Temple United Methodist Church, Arlington

Rev. Joan Bell-Haynes, Co-Pastor, United Christian Parish, an Ecumenical Congregation uniting four denominations in ministry: Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Presbyterian Church USA, United Church of Christ and United Methodist Church, Reston

Rabbi Stephanie Bernstein, Temple Rodef Shalom, a Reform Jewish congregation, Falls Church

Rev. Madelyn Campbell, Interim Minister, Unitarian Universalist Church of the Shenandoah Valley, Stephens City

Rev. Mandy England Cole, Senior Pastor, Ginter Park Baptist Church, Richmond

John D. Copenhaver, Jr., Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of Religion and Philosophy, Shenandoah University, Winchester

The Reverend Sharon K. Core, Arlington Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian Church (USA), Arlington

Rev. Kristen Curlee, Senior Pastor, Emmaus United Church of Christ, Vienna

Rev. Dr. David Ensign, Pastor, Clarendon Presbyterian, Arlington & Member of the Board, POFEV

Rev. Henry E. "Hank" Fairman, Little River United Church of Christ, Annandale

Rev Nancy Fitzgerald, Pastor, Arlington Church of the Brethren, Arlington

Rabbi David Greenspoon, Congregation Sha'are Shalom, Leesburg

Rev Trish Hall, Spiritual Leader, Center for Spiritual Living Metro, Arlington

Rev. Russell Heiland, Senior Minister, Unity of Fairfax Church, Oakton

Rev. Dr. David M. Hindman, retired clergy, The United Methodist Church

Rev. Laura Horton-Ludwig, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, Oakton

Rev. Phyllis L. Hubbell, Co-minister, The Unitarian Universalist Church of Loudoun, Leesburg

Rev. Dr. Stephen G. Hyde, American Baptist & Alliance of Baptists, Ravensworth Baptist Church, Annandale

Fr. Jason Lody, FCM, Pastor, American National Catholic Church, St. Anthony of Padua, Centreville

Rev. John P. Manwell, Co-minister, The Unitarian Universalist Church of Loudoun, Leesburg

Laura Martin, Director of Mission Integration and Congregational Care, Rock Spring United Church of Christ, Arlington

Rev. Scott McNeill, Bull Run Unitarian Universalists, Manassas

Rev. David Miller, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, Oakton

Kim Moeller, United Church of Christ pastor, Leesburg

Rev. Amber Henry Neuroth, Hope United Church of Christ, Alexandria

Rev. Dr. Linda Olson Peebles, Minister of Faith in Action, Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, Arlington

The Rev. A. Patrick Prest, Episcopal priest, Professor Emeritus Virginia Commonwealth University

The Rev. Dr. William Bradley Roberts, Episcopalian Professor, Virginia Theological Seminary, Alexandria

Rev. Dr. Lisa Rzepka, Pastor, John Calvin Presbyterian Church, Annandale

Rev. Scott Sammler-Michael, Senior Minister, Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church, Burke

Rabbi Amy J. Sapowith

Rabbi Jeffrey Saxe, Temple Rodef Shalom, a Reform Jewish congregation, Falls Church

Rev. Lyndon Sayers, Lutheran Pastor (ELCA), Lexington

Rabbi Amy Schwartzman, Temple Rodef Shalom, a Reform Jewish congregation, Falls Church

Cantor Michael Shochet, Senior Clergy, Temple Rodef Shalom, Falls Church

Rev. Katherine A. Stanford, Associate Pastor, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Old Presbyterian Meeting House, Alexandria

The Rev. Heather VanDeventer, Episcopal Priest, Alexandria

The Rev. Daniel Vélez-Rivera, Vicar, Saint Gabriel's Episcopal Church, Leesburg

Rev. Rosemary Welch, Virginia Conference United Methodist Church, Reston

Rev. Juli Wilson-Black, Pastor, Fairlington Presbyterian Church, Alexandria

The Rev. Dr. Karen-Marie Yust, Rowe Professor of Christian Education, Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond