

Testimony in Opposition to SB 180 - "Women's Bill of Rights"
Rev. Melissa Woeppel, Lindsborg, KS
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare, February 15, 2023

To the Members of the Committee on Public Health and Welfare:

I am the Rev. Melissa Woeppel from Lindsborg, KS, serving as Campus Pastor at Bethany College. I write to you as a woman, who this bill claims to represent and protect. I also write to you as a pastor of people who would not find themselves represented by this legislation. For these reasons, I urge you to oppose SB180.

I am a cisgender, heterosexual woman. That is who I know myself to be. It is my deeply rooted faith that compels me to regard the humanity of others, even as they understand themselves differently than I understand myself. As I read Scripture, I hear and know of the rich diversity of creation that reflects the very image of God. Such goodness of who we were created to be cannot be limited to a complementarian or binary understanding of sex and gender.

This bill doesn't name transgender, gender fluid, or non-binary people as the target of this legislation; yet if they are not the target, what is the point of this bill? I cannot abide by this attempt to pit women against the LGBTQIA+ community, as if my safety comes at the expense of their oppression. Policies that prevent assault do not need to be gendered. Any person assaulting any person sexually is already committing a crime and we can address it without this law.

Additionally, students and members of my community deserve to be able to fully participate in work, school, and public life. Public facilities should be accessible to everyone, regardless of their gender identity or expression. No one should have to worry about finding a restroom they can use in their own place of residence or employment.

If this is really about supporting and protecting women, I have some alternative legislative suggestions. Enact gun reform so that every month, 70 women won't be shot and killed by a domestic partner. Expand Medicaid coverage so that over 40,000 women living in poverty could have access to preventative and life-saving healthcare.

Rather than creating false divisions, we must act out of the truth that our humanity is bound up with our siblings' humanity. Let us put our effort toward working for the common good, rather than continuing to enact policies of oppression and marginalization. Again I urge you to vote no on SB180.

Thank you.