



HB 4927 & 4928

Mr. Chairman, Senators, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be heard on this matter. The Secular Coalition for America is a coalition of 11 secular groups whose purpose is to advocate on behalf of nontheistic and secular Americans to increase the visibility and respect for nontheistic viewpoints in the United States, and to protect and strengthen the secular character of our government as the best guarantee of freedom for all. The purpose of the Secular Coalition for Michigan is to increase the visibility and respect for nontheistic viewpoints in Michigan, and bring to your attention the concerns of secular Michiganders.

A recent Pew Research Study (October 2012) found that the number of people in the United States who do not have any particular religion, the "Nones" represent nearly 20% (19,7%) of the United States population. The Secular Coalition for America is working to make sure that we are heard on Capitol Hill. We fight in Washington DC against religious privileging on a federal level. The Secular Coalition For Michigan brings together secular Michiganders to influence government officials, legislation, and regulations.

One of the reasons that our country is so strong is because we agree to follow the rules. If we lose an election we don't go out and arm ourselves and attempt to overthrow the government. What we do is we prepare instead for the next election. The most basic rules that we have are found in the Michigan, and United States constitutions.

Secular Michiganders are concerned about these bills because they attempt to exempt religious organizations from obeying our basic rights to Equal Protection of the Laws, and the right to be free from government interference with religion. This bill would permit religious groups to freely discriminate against individuals on the basis of religion, their color, their sex, as well as their Weight, Height etc. , as long as they claim strong religious objections.

Thus, an adoption agency could refuse place a child with someone because they are a Humanist, or gay, or Jewish, or Black. This is unacceptable in a pluralistic society. Religions must not be given preferences just because of their beliefs.

Thank you again for hearing the concerns of our members.

Marc Shaberman
Cochairman