

Members of the Committee,

I am writing this in opposition of HB 7005 and I ask that you would do the same.

As a parent it is my right to make decisions for my children. I uphold certain beliefs and this belief system guides me as to how my children are raised. Religious beliefs can be defined as inward convictions or a feeling of certainty about what something means. They do not revolve around a God or gods as no one religion can claim Supremacy over all others. These beliefs are however both mental and emotional and are deeply rooted within.

By adding clergy members to the list of those allowed to acknowledge religious exemption, the State is blatantly disregarding those who do not report to a clergy to practice their religious beliefs. Religion is personal and private and does not solely occur in a physical place of worship or with a specific member of the clergy. Requiring signatures from clergy members would be unconstitutional and discriminates against religions with no clergy.

In as such, the act of requiring acknowledgement for a religious exemption, from any third party, forces one to reveal private medical information in order to exercise a religious freedom as guaranteed by the First Amendment to the US Constitution. Of the listed parties on the exemption a school nurse is the only one privy to any medical information about a child and that information is subsequently protected through FERPA. Disclosing medical information to non-licensed, non-medical professionals is poor practice and does not guarantee protection of that information.

If acknowledging parties can be added or removed with such ease, what is there to prevent all other parties to be removed with the exception of clergy making them the sole party? If the State moves forward in requiring the acknowledgement of clergy, this will have a chilling effect on the free exercise of religious liberty. A clergy member holds no more authority in acknowledgment of my identity then a school nurse.

Thank you for your time and consideration for opposing this bill.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Schmitt