

Dear 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 and to decide what I feel is best for them. We are a religious family and have chosen to raise our children in the same way. 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. Nor does religion mean that you have to report to clergy to practice your religious beliefs. Religion is a personal and private family matter which is protected by our Constitution and violates the separation of church and state.

By adding clergy members to the list of those allowed to acknowledge religious exemption, the State is disregarding those who do not report to a clergy to practice their religious beliefs. Religion is a personal and private family matter which is protected by our Constitution and violates the separation of church and state, and does not require attendance to a place of worship or the presence of clergy in order to do so. Requiring signatures from clergy members would be unconstitutional and discriminates against religions with no clergy.

Also, 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 held with confidence and not shared with public agencies. 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 m, with the exception of clergy, making them the sole party? If this is what our State is headed towards, it will be a great infringement 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,
Melissa Tulisano