

Testimony of Rev. Kent H. Little, Lead Pastor
College Hill United Methodist Church, Wichita, KS
In Support of HB2323
January 14, 2016

Members of the House Committee considering HB2323,

In our beginning documents our forbearers wrote, *"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."* They continued on indicating an inclusive posture toward not only the forming of our nation but its future with words of *"We the people,"* and our motto of *"e pluribus unum,"* *"Out of Many, One."* These lofty words contained in our great nation's founding documents point to our commitment to equality and access.

In our own State of Kansas founding documents we hear the commitment to equality and access in the preamble to our constitution, *"We, the people of Kansas, grateful to Almighty God for our civil and religious privileges, in order to insure the full enjoyment of our rights as American citizens..."* They echo in the halls of our capital with our State's Bill of Rights, *"Equal rights. All men are possessed of equal and inalienable natural rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."*

While some of the language in our national and state documents speak to an earlier time that spoke of "men" rather than a more inclusive "all," we know of their intent. History tells us that there have been numerous times in our past we as a nation and as a state have failed to live up to the ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for *all* our citizens. There have been battles fought, lives lost, violence of word and deed that have often preceded rights and privileges for all. Those are dark times in our history when citizens of our great nation and state were denied rights, privileges, and access simply based on who they were. These times in our history were not the best of who our founders called us to be, these time were and are not the best of who we are. We as a people know, we are at our best when discrimination is not lawful and citizens of our state and nation have equal standing in the eyes of the law and are without threat to their lives and livelihood.

HB2323, provides crucial additional language in creating the protections granted to all of our citizens. HB2323 insures all of our citizens regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity are not at risk of their livelihoods, or the pursuit of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," based simply on who they are as children of the Creator.

Passing HB2323 is a furthering of the best of who we can be as a state. Amending the Kansas Act Against Discrimination to include "sexual orientation and gender identity" ensures our full citizenry access without discrimination, and aids in enhancing economic considerations for our state, as well as creating an open, welcoming, and inviting posture to those who might consider living here in the future.

I implore you to amend the Kansas Act Against Discrimination to include sexual orientation and gender identity, such addition speaks to who we should be as a nation and who we should be as a state. It is the right thing to do, and raises us up to the best of what we stand for and who we are called to be.

Sincerely,

Rev. Kent H. Little, Lead Pastor
College Hill United Methodist Church
Wichita, KS