

Testimony of Rev. Jackie Carter, Senior Pastor  
First Metropolitan Community Church, Wichita, KS  
In Support of HB2323  
January 14, 2016

Good Afternoon. My name is Rev. Jackie Carter. I am the Senior Pastor at First Metropolitan Community Church in Wichita Kansas. We are the largest LGBT faith community in the state. We operate the second largest food pantry in the State providing food to more than 1100 hungry Kansans every week of the year. We also feed more than 2000 meals every year at the homeless overflow shelter in Wichita. Our faith community is recognized in the city as one whose focus is on inclusion, equality, and justice—an outgrowth of our conviction that God loves everyone, Period.

In November of 2014, the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that same sex couples were able to get married. I officiated a very public wedding for 9 same gendered couples in Wichita. It was a great night. All the couples did exactly what was required by law in order to legitimize their relationships. All of the couples that were married that night had been in relationship one with another for no less than 5 years.

One of the couples I married was two men who had been together for more than 15 years. They owned a home together, they owned vehicles together, and their parents had fully accepted both men as their sons. In short, they were already married. They were so excited for this opportunity to take this step to be legally married in this state.

They stood in the cold that night with other couples and pledged their love one to another. They cut the cake, toasted one another and excitedly had their wedding pictures taken.

Ten days later, one of them was terminated from his job. 18 years at the same job. Received pay raises, exemplary reviews, he was a trainer of new employees. His services were no longer needed. That's it. That's the only reason one needs in this state. Terminated on Friday. Sunday the company advertised for the same position.

Job interview after job interview and denial after denial. Some employers were nice enough to say right out, we can't have a homosexual in the mix here. Our mechanics wouldn't put up with you.

We don't need to worry about this homosexual man. He has a great job in Colorado. He is paying taxes and helping to support their economic growth. He really just wants to put Kansas behind him.

A 43 year old mother of two fired from her job because the idea of her having a wife is sickening to the owner of the restaurant.

A 19 year old car wash attendant terminated because he might have AIDS.

A 45 year old account manager asked to find new employment because he might seek benefits for his new husband.

The stories are true, and numerous. They all happened right here in Kansas. Gay, lesbian and transgendered people are threatened with loss of employment and some fired every single day in this state. You won't find a long line of them coming to tell you about it because they want to feed their families, pay their bills, and keep their employment.

Why do we want to stay in a state that doesn't seem to care about us? Kansas is our home. Kansas used to be in the forefront of civil rights for all its people. We have been born and raised as Kansans. You can ensure that we have the same opportunities that our heterosexual brothers and sisters have. Don't let another mechanic be driven from our state simply because someone has determined that his sexual orientation is their business. We are better than this.