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Testimony by Rev. Caroline Dean in Opposition to SB180
Senate Health and Human Services Committee, Sen. Brenda Landwehr, Chair
March 6, 2023

Mme. Chair, members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony before you today. My name is Rev. Caroline Dean; I am a pastor in the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference of the United Church of Christ, and today I am also speaking of behalf of Kansas Interfaith Action, a statewide, multifaith issue advocacy organization that partners with several of the mainline Christian denominations, including the UCC, as well as Jewish and Muslim Kansans.

As a Christian, as a pastor, as a community leader, as a woman, and as a mother, I urge you to oppose SB180.

This bill is part of an deluge of legislation targeting trans individuals, which includes the sports bill and the gender-affirming healthcare bill that was heard yesterday. Numerous pastors submitted testimony against all of these bills, because we oppose the vilification and victimization of the trans population.

Many of us grew up in a time when we didn't know many or any trans people. That has changed. A growing number of people have gender identities that don't match what was assigned to them at birth. As a pastor I have interacted with many trans individuals, or the parents of trans children. It is much more preferable that these folks be able to express their identity than that we keep them in a box that they didn't choose and which doesn't fit them.

Someone becoming a woman doesn't threaten or take anything away from me as a woman. There are no professional opportunities that would be taken away from me, no educational opportunities, no social opportunities.

The irony of this "Women's Bill of Rights" is that it doesn't enumerate any actual rights, instead focusing on weaponizing the rhetoric of rights to erase protections for transgender and non-binary people. But I can name some rights that women need: the right to pay equity. The right to be free of gendered violence and sexual discrimination. The right to have affordable childcare, and to have access to healthcare when I or my children are in need. The right to a home, to food on the table.

None of these are in this so-called "women's bill of rights." Neither is the right to bodily autonomy, which was the subject of a constitutional amendment vote last year, a result that this legislature doesn't respect and attempts to overturn every day.

Members of the Committee, women do need to have their rights protected, but they do not need to have these needs weaponized as an attack against our trans sisters. Please end the attacks on the trans community, and please vote against SB180.

Thank you for your attention.