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Good morning. I am Paul Jackson the Associate Minister and Director of Christian Life at University Congregational Church in Wichita, Kansas. Thank you for allowing me to speak this morning.

Religious beliefs are already well protected in both our Federal Constitution and our State Constitution. I am proud that I live in a state and country that protects my beliefs as fiercely as our various laws provide for. I am even prouder when like-minded individuals who share similar beliefs can gather and share those beliefs in ways that are meaningful for them. However; when those religious beliefs require some sort of additional protection; specifically legislation that will allow divisions to occur in public spaces (such as SB 175 intends to do), then we are no longer discussing religious beliefs. We are talking about something else. But not religious beliefs. We have left the spiritual and we have entered the realm of the political. And the realm of power.

I've read this bill and I've read the arguments for and against. I will simply repeat—religious belief is already powerfully protected in this state and in this country. What SB 175 seeks to legislate is not religious belief. It seeks to provide ways to further divide our communities and our public spaces, of which our state universities are obviously a part.

Why should we further seek to divide our state? Why are we not finding ways to reach out to our neighbors and those who do not share our beliefs—why are we not celebrating our differences, instead of creating legislation to further create division?

I ask that this committee reject this bill and spend time on legislation that will truly create public cohesion and care for our neighbors.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Paul Edwin Jackson

...where head and heart are equal partners in faith.