

Prepared Testimony of Katherine Bussard regarding SB 147
Before the Michigan House of Representatives Judiciary Committee, April 19, 2023

INTRODUCTION

Distinguished Chair and Distinguished Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony for consideration on this important matter. My name is Katherine Bussard, Executive Director & COO of Salt & Light Global and Vice-President of Mid-Michigan Women for Conservative Values. Today, I offer the following testimony in my personal capacity and wish to express my strong opposition to SB 147 as currently before this body.

ATTRIBUTES V. ACTIONS: A DANGEROUS REDEFINITION OF CIVIL RIGHTS

SB 147 confuses the very nature of Civil Rights. The Eliot Larson Civil Rights Act, which SB 147 seeks to amend, currently defends citizens against discrimination **based on the personal attributes** of people, such as age, height, weight, skin-color, race, religion, sex/gender, national origin, and other immutable characteristics inherent in their person. However, in a departure from this standard, SB 147 redefines sex from its adjective function as a word that describe attributes, like one's gender, gender identity, or the state of being pregnant, to a word that instead is defined by an action, "the termination of a pregnancy." Thus, SB 147 substantially enlarges our Civil Rights Act from defending against discrimination based on the personal attributes to defending against discrimination **based on action**. Elective actions are not the same as immutable attributes, and defining them as worthy of equal protection devalues real civil rights. It also sets a dangerous precedent; if passed, what other elective choices or personal actions will employers be required to make accommodations for or provide benefits for in the future? The Family Medical Leave Act and other statutes already non-therapeutic abortion; enshrining such an action as a civil right is unnecessary, bad public policy and sets a limitless precedent to redefine civil rights to encompass other personal choices.

A DAMAGING PROPOSAL FOR PEOPLE OF FAITH

SB 147 could create inherent conflict in the law between an employee seeking benefits for the elective termination of the life of their unborn child and the protected religious conscience of an employer whose faith may preclude them from supporting the destruction of human life. Where this conflict exists, enforcement would likely result in government action against religious employers that violates the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and personal identity rights of people who find their identity to be based in their religious beliefs. For example, people of Abrahamic faiths hold to the belief that all human life is sacred because it is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and that that life and personhood begin at conception, where the Creator knows and ordains a unique plan for each person (Psalm 139:13-16). Forcing an employer to fund or otherwise accommodate actions that violate their inherent right to religious conscience in an unconscionable injustice. Enshrining the action of electively killing a pre-born human as a civil right likewise constitutes an unconscionable act of age discrimination that devalues all human life and assaults the very image of God. For these reasons, I concur with the testimony presented to the body by Professor William Wagner of the Great Lakes Justice Center and Genevieve Marnon of Right to Life.

CONCLUSION

Because of SB 147's damaging and dangerous consequences, I urge you to oppose its needless passage.