

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

NORTH AMERICA SOUTHWEST AREA

March 16, 2022

RE: SUPPORT FOR THE EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS FOR ALL ARIZONANS ACT

Dear Speaker Bowers & Members of the Ad Hoc Committee,

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is pleased to be part of a coalition of faith, business, LGBTQ, and community groups supporting the *Equality and Fairness for All Arizonans Act*. This bill is the result of good-faith efforts to work together in a spirit of mutual respect and accommodation to address issues that matter to every citizen in Arizona.

Everyone should have a fair opportunity to obtain a job, a place to live, and public services. This bipartisan bill protects those rights for LGBTQ persons while also protecting the religious rights of individuals and faith communities. While no bill is perfect, this bill strikes a balance that encourages respect and fairness for all people.

The Church has joined similar coalitions to support religious freedom and non-discrimination bills in the past, including one in Utah in 2015 and another at the federal level in 2019. In supporting the federal bill, the Church stated that “the nation is more united when diverse individuals and groups can work cooperatively to advance sound policy.”

We invite everyone to carefully read and consider an address delivered in November 2021 at the University of Virginia by President Dallin H. Oaks of the Church’s First Presidency entitled “Going Forward with Religious Freedom and Nondiscrimination,” available at <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/president-dallin-h-oaks-speech-university-of-virginia>

In this landmark address, President Oaks calls for “a new, workable balance between religious freedom and non-discrimination.” In order to achieve this balance, he reminded us that

Good faith negotiation invites that seldom-appreciated virtue so necessary to democracy: tolerance, free of bigotry toward those whose opinions or practices differ from our own. Far from being a weakness, reconciling adverse positions through respectful negotiation is a virtue. As Jesus taught, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”

President Oaks pointed people to a “better way” that focuses on “seeking harmony by finding practical solutions to our differences, with love and respect for all people” which “does not require any compromise of core principles.”

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints supports bills like the *Equality and Fairness for All Arizonans Act* that seek to resolve conflicts between LGBTQ and religious rights in a balanced and respectful way.

Sincerely,



Elder Jonathan S. Schmitt
Area Seventy