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Reply to: Virginia

April 15, 2016

Via U.S. and Electronic Mail

Senator Robert Onder
201 West Capitol Avenue, Room 226
Jefferson City, MO 65101
Bob.Onder@senate.mo.gov

RE: Liberty Counsel supports SJR 39 and offers pro bono legal defense if enacted

Dear Senator Onder:

By way of brief introduction, Liberty Counsel is a non-profit constitutional litigation firm with offices in Orlando, Florida; Lynchburg, Virginia; and Washington D.C. Liberty Counsel's practice is primarily federal. We specialize in First Amendment religious liberty matters, and have successfully represented numerous clients, in both the private and public sector.

I write to commend you for your leadership in sponsoring Missouri Senate Joint Resolution 39, ("SJR 39"). Liberty Counsel extends with our commendation an offer of *pro bono*, free, legal representation, should SJR 39 be enacted. We urge the Missouri legislature to enact SJR 39 and we urge Governor Nixon to sign it.

SJR 39 is constitutional, and is an appropriate protection of religious free exercise rights, in light of legitimate concerns about the climate against the free exercise of religious belief in Missouri and nationwide.

In short, SJR 39 simply provides that no person will be punished by the government for refraining from participating in or providing personal services for a same-sex "marriage" ceremony. SJR 39 is particularly necessary due to the intentional targeting of people of faith and churches by homosexual "marriage" supporters, both in and out of government. Bakeries have been driven out of business for declining to lend their creativity to ceremonies which violate their religious beliefs about the nature of marriage. Photographers, wedding dress shops, florists, and bed & breakfasts have all been targeted or vilified for likewise acting in

conformity with their religious convictions. Liberty Counsel has advised numerous small businesses owned by people of faith, in addition to churches, which have been targeted in other states for their stance for Biblical truth.

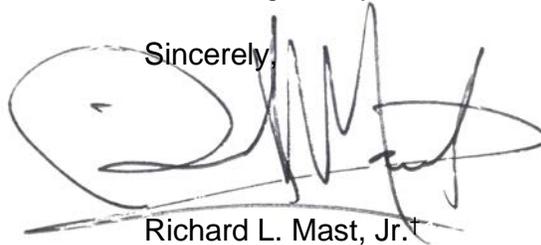
SJR 39 is in no way discriminatory. It does not prevent the state from providing marriage licenses, or any other marital entitlement, service, or benefit that is authorized by the state to same-sex couples. It does not permit any health organization to discriminate against any same-sex couple's right to hospital visitation, or to make health care decisions.

SJR 39 protects the right of conscience and free exercise of religious belief by preventing the state of Missouri or state agencies from discriminating through the imposition of taxes or fines; or by denying licenses, loans, insurance, medical benefits, or access to meeting spaces, channels of communication, or other resources to those who hold and act upon their sincere religious belief concerning any purported marriage between two persons of the same sex.

For these reasons and others, Liberty Counsel supports SJR 39, and is prepared to offer a *pro bono* – free - legal defense of it, should SJR 39 be enacted. Liberty Counsel applauds your steadfastness and willingness to stand for the rights of conscience, in offering our legal resources in service of the people of Missouri.

We urge the passage of SJR 39, and should it be enacted, Liberty Counsel stands ready to serve Missouri as outside counsel to defend it at no cost to the taxpayers. Liberty Counsel has the track record, litigation experience and the conviction necessary to prevail in such a defense. If you have any questions about the points contained in this letter, or about Liberty Counsel's experience in these matters, please feel free to contact my office via telephone at 407-875-1776. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,



Richard L. Mast, Jr.†

RLM/vab
CC:
Via Email
Governor Jay Nixon via Sam Rourke
Senator Ed Emery
Senator David Sater
House Speaker Todd Richardson
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