

CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF OHIO

December 4, 2013

Statement in Support of the Proposed Ohio Religious Freedom Restoration Act

The Catholic Conference of Ohio is pleased to join with Representatives Derickson and Patmon, and the many faith leaders and concerned citizens, in support of the Ohio Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

Two weeks ago, Archbishop William E. Lori, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, issued a statement celebrating the 20th anniversary of President Clinton's signing of the Federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). I would like to quote from that statement:

“...The Religious Freedom Restoration Act has proven to be one of the most important legislative achievements for religious liberty in this country in a generation. Its enactment was prompted by a 1990 Supreme Court decision, *Employment Division v. Smith*, that substantially lowered the level of protection that the free exercise of religion receives under the United States Constitution. Although RFRA's application to states was struck down in a later court decision, it continues to apply to the federal government, and its text has proven to be the inspiration for state RFRAs which are equally protective of religious freedom...”

We believe that this proposed legislation, which mirrors the Federal Act, would serve to better protect religious freedom. It's intent is to prevent laws and actions that burden a person's exercise of religion unless there is a compelling state interest and least restrictive means of enforcement are used.

Thank you.

Jim Tobin
Associate Director, Catholic Conference of Ohio