CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF OHIO

Testimony in Support of HB 286
February 16, 2016

Chairman Derickson, vice chair Ginter, ranking minority member Howse, and members of the Committee. My name is Jim Tobin. I am an associate director with the Catholic Conference of Ohio. Our understanding of religious liberty is the fundamental basis for our support of HB 286.

As most of you know, the Catholic Church has a longstanding teaching on the sacredness of marriage, and specific requirements regarding the ceremony. While we will defend the premise that the recent Supreme Court decision did not change our ability to practice such teachings within our church structures, we feel it is important to have Ohio pursue legislation that provides the State with clarity and intent, lest there be uncertainties and legal challenges to this First Amendment Right.

During Pope Francis' recent visit to the United States, he stated:

"With countless other people of good will, [American Catholics] are concerned that efforts to build a just and wisely ordered society respect their deepest concerns and their right to religious liberty. That freedom remains one of America's most precious possessions. And, as my brothers, the United States Bishops, have reminded us, all are called to be vigilant, precisely as good citizens, to preserve and defend that freedom from everything that would threaten or compromise it."

We urge your support of HB 286.