



November 16, 2022

Dear Senator:

We are writing today to urge you to vote against the Respect for Marriage Act (RFMA). Religious schools remain under threat by the legislation. We have been assured by supporters that the amended version will help. It does not.

A significant missing factor in the amendment language is that there is no affirmative defense to protect them. This leaves us exposed to government reinterpretations that put religious schools at a disadvantage. For example, Maryland's school choice and other programs of general applicability includes a requirement that schools not discriminate in admissions on the basis of sexual orientation. The state regularly confused statements of policy based on Christian marriage in school handbooks as discrimination. It eventually demanded a Christian school return six figures of already-received funds. The school was forced to sue. It won. It does *not* discriminate in admissions on the basis of sexual orientation simply because it believes in and lives out Christian marriage.

Let us be clear: the Maryland school *won* its case – that was a foregone conclusion – **but the lawsuit is the punishment.**

The RFMA will set up religious schools *nationwide* to this sort of harassment. For example, the IRS will surely use the RFMA as a basis for pretending there's a national policy on marriage that conflicts with Christian marriage. School tax exempt status will be threatened and the lawsuits which schools may or may not win will be the punishment for holding to a standard of Christian marriage. **This bill does nothing to prevent it and provides no help.**

You have heard supporters say the amendments resolve the issues. Please know the religious institutions you're hearing from are the ones in the line of fire who will be directly affected. We respectfully submit that we are best equipped to know the threats posed to our institutions. The evidence before you comes from a wide array of religious institutions and leaders across the board from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to hundreds of Protestant churches in a letter led by the Alliance Defending Freedom. We add our voices to theirs in expressing our concerns and urge you to reject the RFMA when the vote comes today.

Respectfully submitted,

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The Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) has over 2250 member schools in the U.S. alone; it has 5000 member schools in the US and globally with an influence that reaches some 24,000 Christian schools with services to strengthen Christian schools and equip Christian educators.

The American Association of Christian Schools (AACCS) represents 700 Christian K-12 schools and colleges as part of state associations in 38 states across the country. Founded in 1972, AACCS exists to promote, establish, advance, and develop Christian schools and Christian education in America.