



WISCONSIN COUNCIL
OF CHURCHES
COURAGE. JUSTICE. HOLY IMAGINATION.

30 W. Mifflin, Suite 602
Madison, WI 53703

To: Members of the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities
From: Rev. Breanna Illéné, Director of Ecumenical Innovation and Justice Initiatives,
Wisconsin Council of Churches
Date: October 4, 2023
Re: Testimony in opposition to Assembly Bill 377

The Wisconsin Council of Churches (WCC) is a network of Christian churches and faith-based organizations committed to working together across our many differences to promote collective good. We connect 21 Christian traditions, which have within them approximately 2,000 congregations and over one million church members. Exercising holy imagination, we help one another make courageous choices that lead toward peacemaking, social and economic justice for Wisconsin's most vulnerable residents, the vitality of the church, and the well-being of our neighbors.

As a Council, we have adopted a statement on Nonviolence that reminds us that "Faithfulness to its mission requires the Church to speak out against violence, minister to its victims, and work tirelessly to reduce the level of violence in society." We come here today to decry the violence in AB 377.

Transgender individuals are unnecessarily under attack, and this legislation is just one of many items currently before our state legislature that cause undue harm to a marginalized community. The isolation and demonizing that this bill promotes are spiritually harmful and empower hate speech and hateful action. Transgender individuals are children of God who deserve a dignified existence.

While it may seem strange to have a group of churches and people of faith speaking on sports, the reality is that we share some commonalities. Sports teams, just like our churches, are meant to be shared spaces to bring people together and build people up. They create community and provide outlets for health, wellness, and collaboration. This bill fails to do any of those things and does quite the opposite. It creates needless division and punishes our young people simply for being who they are in the world.

Our faith teaches that God is relentless in pursuit of well-being for the world and its inhabitants. As Christians, we are called to facilitate communities of well-being, and public policy that does not harm. In this spirit of love and accountability, we reject AB 377 on its merits, and we ask this body to do the same.

Thank you for your time.