



December 6, 2022

Dear Representative:

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 were assured by supporters in the Senate that the amended version will help. It does not.

A significant factor missing 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 include 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. Maryland even demanded a Christian school return six figures of already-received funds. The school was forced to sue. It won. This school does *not* discriminate in admissions on the basis of sexual orientation simply because it believes in and lives out Christian marriage and should not have had to go to court in order to retain its First Amendment rights.

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. Recent past history provides evidence that the IRS will surely use the RFMA as a basis for claiming there's a national policy on marriage. A determination of this sort will inevitably bring the IRS into conflict with organizations who hold to a belief in 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 clarity on these organizations' First Amendment rights.**

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 and ask you to vote down the bill.

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.*