



South Dakota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

February 10, 2021

Re: Senate Bill 166

To our South Dakota Legislators:

We are the bishops of the Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota, and the South Dakota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We represent clergy, religious institutions, organizations, affiliations, and devout Christians throughout our great state of South Dakota.

Our Christian faith has taught us the values of love, inclusion, as well as caring for and protecting our most vulnerable. We strive to live out these values by loving God and loving our neighbors.

We are writing to voice our support for Senate Bill 166 and ask you to pass this piece of legislation.

Hate crimes against our LGBTQ, non-binary, and Native American Two-Spirit siblings happen far too often in our state. Our current legislation can strive to do a better job at protecting them. . We believe that the government has a responsibility to protect its citizens from all acts motivated by hate against any individual or group of persons. As Christians we have an obligation to be a part of creating a healthy and safe world. We cannot cease in that work until all people can live free from the terror caused by biased crimes.

We ask that you support SB166 and pass this legislation to protect the safety of all South Dakotans regardless of their sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or identification as a Native American Two-Spirit.

Faithfully,

The Rev. Constanze Hagmaier
Bishop, South Dakota Synod ELCA

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Jonathan H. Folts
Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota