Michigan governor vows to veto religious freedom bill unless civil rights are protected

Mark Yapching . Published 20 April 2015

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| Photo: Reuters/Rebecca Cook
Michigan Governor Rick Snyder vowed to veto any religious freedom bill if it does not include LGBT protection.

Michigan Governor Rick Snyder says he will veto a religious freedom bill in his state if it fails to include an expansion of the Elliott-Carter Civil Rights Act.

The Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act is a state legislation in Michigan that prohibits discriminatory practices in workplaces, housing projects and access to public accommodation and services based on "religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, height, weight, familial status, or marital status."

Although there were efforts in 2005 and last year to expand the Act to include LGBT protections, none of these attempts were passed in Michigan's legislative bodies.

Governor Snyder said last week that he will not sign any religious freedom bill if it does not include the addition of LGBT protection to the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act.

"Given all the events that are happening in Indiana, I thought it would be good to clarify my position," he told the Detroit Free Press. "I would veto RFRA (Religious Freedom Restoration Act) legislation in Michigan if it is a stand-alone piece of legislation."

by adiply

A religious freedom bill is currently on the floor of Michigan's Senate, similar to the controversial RFRAs passed in Arkansas and Indiana. A similar bill, which included expansions to the Act that would extend protections to the LGBT community was also proposed last year but failed to pass.

Synder said he wants the expansions for LGBT protection to be placed in an adjoining bill to the RFRA currently being debated.

The spokesman of an LGBT student organisation in the University of Michigan is unsure the expansion is enough to protect everyone's civil rights.

"We very much are glad that Governor Snyder has threatened to veto RFRA, and that (he) has called for an expansion of the civil rights act, but we would need more details before we could think authoritatively on what that deal would be," Outlaws' spokesperson Wyatt Fore told The Michigan Daily.

Michael Woodford, assistant professor at Wilfrid Laurier University in Ontario, Canada, expressed doubt that the LGBT protection bill would be passed.

"My concern would be... if (the bill for LGBT protections) would actually go through," Woodford said.

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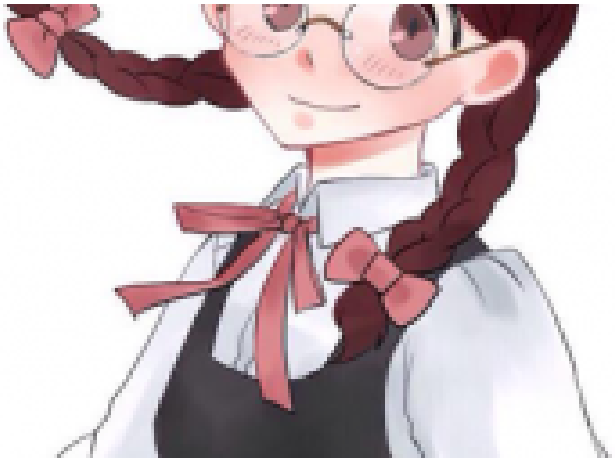

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