



SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST
CHURCH

Columbia Union Conference

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The Honorable Robert E. Belfanti, Jr.
Chair
House Labor Relations Committee
House P.O. Box 202107
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: Statement in Opposition to HB 2626, Proposed Amendments to the State Labor Relations Act

Dear Mr. Belfanti:

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, I submit this statement in opposition to the proposed amendments to the Pennsylvania State Labor Relations Act contained in HB 2626.

The administrative responsibilities of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Pennsylvania are cared for by the Pennsylvania Conference. That organization is responsible for the operation of the Churches elementary and secondary schools throughout the State; and, employs teachers and other workers in carrying out the educational ministry of Church.

Based on biblical principles the Seventh-day Adventist Church has taught that its members, and church institutions, must remain free and independent from organizations – such as labor unions - which might violate a member's conscience or interfere with the fulfillment of the mission of the Church. Indeed, church members have been encouraged not to join or financially support labor unions. And, importantly, Seventh-day Adventist institutions – such as parochial schools – are following the historic teachings of the Church when they refuse to recognize labor unions as bargaining units; or, to enter into contractual negotiations with them or similar organizations. The Church's teachings are set forth in the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' Working Policy, Sections HB 30.05, et. seq.

In the event that HB 2626 becomes law, the Pennsylvania Conference of Seventh-day Adventists would face the distinct possibility that its employees might violate historical Church teachings by joining a labor organization. In turn, the Church itself would be obliged to refuse to enter into contractual negotiations with the union representing such employees. Ultimately the Church would be forced to make a cruel choice of closing an educational institution rather than to violate its teachings.

The Pennsylvania Conference of Seventh-day Adventists believes HB 2626 violates the Religion Clauses of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution by imposing a burden on the Church's Free Exercise of Religion. In this regard, the Pennsylvania Conference has read and endorses the position articulated in the testimony of Attorney Mark Chopko. The proposed legislation should be defeated.

Thank you for considering this statement. I reserve the right to supplement this statement; and to present oral testimony before your Committee during the consideration of this matter. Finally I remain available to answer your questions concerning the Adventist Church's position.

Very truly yours,

s/ Walter E. Carson

**Walter E. Carson
Vice President & General Counsel**