**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 20‑1‑25 SO AS TO ENACT THE “SOUTH CAROLINA PASTOR PROTECTION ACT”; TO ESTABLISH THAT A REFUSAL TO PERFORM A MARRIAGE CEREMONY IS NOT A BASIS FOR A CAUSE OF ACTION BY THE STATE OR POLITICAL SUBDIVISION AGAINST A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION, AN INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYED BY A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION OR A MINISTER OR OTHER MEMBER OF THE CLERGY; AND TO PROVIDE THAT AN INDIVIDUAL OR ORGANIZATION MAY NOT BE REQUIRED TO PERFORM A MARRIAGE CEREMONY IF IT WOULD CAUSE THE ORGANIZATION OR INDIVIDUAL TO VIOLATE A SINCERELY HELD RELIGIOUS BELIEF.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. This act must be cited as the ‘South Carolina Pastor Protection Act’.

SECTION 2. Article 1, Chapter 1, Title 20 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 20‑1‑25. (A) A religious organization, an organization supervised or controlled by, or established in connection with, a religious organization, an individual employed by a religious organization acting within the scope of employment, or a minister or other member of the clergy who refuses to provide services, accommodations, facilities, goods, or privileges pursuant to this section is not liable in a civil or criminal cause of action. Any other action by this State or a political subdivision of this State to penalize or withhold benefits or privileges from a protected organization or individual, including tax exemptions or governmental contracts, grants, or licenses is prohibited.

(B) A religious organization, an organization supervised or controlled by, or established in connection with, a religious organization, an individual employed by a religious organization acting within the scope of employment, or a minister or other member of the clergy may not be required to administer a marriage ceremony or provide services, accommodations, facilities, goods, or privileges for a purpose related to a marriage ceremony if the action would cause the organization or individual to violate a sincerely held religious belief.”

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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