

THE
Episcopal
CHURCH

July 19, 2017

The Honorable Joe Straus
Speaker of the House
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78768

Dear Speaker Straus:

Since we wrote to you in February expressing our concern about Senate Bill 6, we have watched with gratitude as you have resisted efforts to enshrine discrimination against our transgender sisters and brothers into Texas law. We write now to urge you to remain steadfast in your opposition during the legislature's current special session.

As the presiding officers of the Episcopal Church, we are firmly opposed to "bathroom bills" and particularly reject the idea that women and children are protected by them. As clergy who remember racist Jim Crow bathroom laws that purported to protect white people, we know the kind of hatred and fear that discriminatory laws can perpetuate.

We are especially thankful for your recent remarks acknowledging the acute emotional and spiritual damage that discrimination does to transgender people. In May, [a review of more than forty studies](#) conducted over nearly two decades found that transgender people attempt suicide 22 times more often than the general public. Your opposition to bathroom bills is one important way that you are helping to prevent tragedies in Texan families, and we are grateful for your moral courage and your leadership.

As you know, the Episcopal Church supports local, state and federal laws that prevent discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression and opposes any legislation that seeks to deny the dignity, equality, and civil rights of transgender people. Because we are currently scheduled to hold our triennial General Convention—a nine-day event that includes as many as 10,000 people—in Austin in July 2018, we are paying especially close attention to the news emerging from your special session.

We want very much to hold our convention in Texas. However, as we wrote to you in February, we must be able to ensure that all Episcopalians and visitors to our convention, including transgender people, are treated with respect, kept safe, and provided appropriate public accommodation consistent with their gender identities.

In 1955, we were forced to move a General Convention from Houston to another state because Texas laws prohibited black and white Episcopalians from being treated equally. We would not stand then for Episcopalians to be discriminated against, and we cannot countenance it now. It would be especially unfortunate if this special session of the Texas legislature presented us with the same difficult choice that church leaders faced more than sixty years ago.

We urge you to remain steadfast in your opposition to any bathroom bills introduced in the special session, and we thank you for your continued commitment to keeping Texas a welcoming state for all of God's children.

Faithfully,



+ Michael B. Curry

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop

Gay C. Jennings

The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings
President, House of Deputies