



Atheists. Agnostics. Humanists  
Americans.



## **SB 4 OPPOSE**

The secular Coalition for Michigan is the Michigan branch of the Secular Coalition for America. It is a coalition of 18 secular groups including the UU Humanists, Society for Humanistic Judaism, Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, American Humanist Association, American Ethical Union, American Atheists and 12 more, that have joined together to present one lobbying voice to represent the views of secular Americans to the United States government. I am here to represent the concerns of secular Michiganders to you.

A 2012 Pew Research study found that nearly 20% of Americans were unaffiliated with any religion, and the number in Michigan was 24%. That is 2.5 Million Michiganders. In 2008 the number was about 16%. Our segment of the population is the fastest growing theological group in the country.

**We oppose SB 4** for the following reasons.

Religious accommodation has a long history in America. Here are a few cases that help illustrate how it has been applied in the past.

In Wisconsin v. Yoder, 406 U.S. 205 (1972), several Amish families refused to send their teen aged children to public school as required by Wisconsin law. The Amish refused to educate their children past the 8<sup>th</sup> grade because that was contrary to their religious beliefs. The Yoders and the other families were fined \$5 for violating the Wisconsin law. The Supreme Court ruled that the Yoders should be allowed to practice their religious beliefs. This case is important because the Yoders did not want to discriminate against anyone. No one got hurt. The Amish families just wanted to be left alone.

In Bob Jones University v. United States, 461 U.S. 574 (1983), the university was practicing racial discrimination, and claimed that their interpretation of the Bible commanded that the races should not

be mixed. The supreme Court however held that the government had a fundamental, overriding interest in eradicating racial discrimination in education. Like SB 4 this case involved discrimination on one of our fundamental civil rights.

In Goldman v. Weinberger, 475 U.S. 503 (1986), Goldman was a captain in the U. S Air Force. He was also an ordained Orthodox Rabbi and wanted to wear a yarmulke when he was indoors which was against the Air Forces' dress code. The Supreme Court however, ruled that the Air Force's interest in uniformity was superior to Goldman's right to practice his religion. In this case Goldman was not asking to discriminate against anyone. He just wanted to be able to practice his religion.

What these cases illustrate is that religious accommodation is appropriate when no ones civil rights are impaired. The rights that we have determined to be fundamental and protected are found in the United States Constitution, the Michigan Constitution and the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act (MCL 37.2101 – 37.2804). For one group to be given the privilege to deny other groups the fundamental civil rights of equality and equal treatment upon which our country was founded and which we have worked so hard to enforce and protect is wrong.

For these reasons we oppose this bill and urge you to vote no on SB 4.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc P. Shaberman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marc Shaberman

Secular Coalition for Michigan

Co-Chair