

ORIGINAL

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04/20/2017

Ed Smith
CLERK OF THE SUPREME COURT
STATE OF MONTANA

Case Number: AF 09-0688

Montana Supreme Court,

I write to encourage your understanding of the protections that need to be extended under Rule 8.4 specifically in relation to discrimination and professional misconduct.

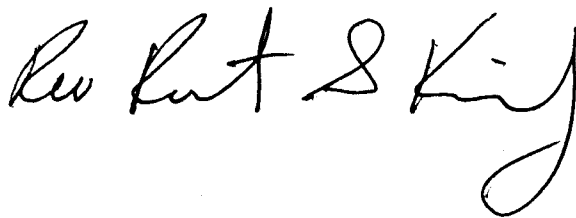
I work with high school and college aged LGBTQ+ persons through a number of community organizations, including a youth coffee house and a college student organization. I repeatedly hear stories of services that are denied due to their identity or orientation. Occasionally it is a boss making comments and then repeatedly passing them over for promotions. Sometimes it is a landlord refusing to accept their applications.

It is not only about the way they are treated but it also then extends to how they feel about themselves. These discriminations get internalized and then too often express themselves in self-esteem, depression and suicide issues. For some, these discriminations become a matter of life and death. The recent article published in the journal JAMA Pediatrics tracked the correlation of reduced LGBTQ+ teen suicide rates and the adoption of Same Sex Marriage laws. Conversely, Montana saw a spike in trans suicides on the heels of the bathroom bills passed in North Carolina. With suicide being the leading cause of death for teens, these protections are simple step to protect our citizens.

As an ordained minister, it also becomes a matter of faith. When we take seriously the great commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves, this means creating protections for our neighbors. Reading through the gospels, it is hard to miss Jesus repeatedly siding with the disposed and marginalized.

Equal support and protections need to explicitly be extended to all of these groups of people.

Reverend Robert Kirby,
408 Alderson
Billings, MT 59101



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