

Judge Rules Mississippi Religious Freedom Law Unconstitutional



Summary: A judge has ruled that Mississippi's discriminatory religious liberty law was unconstitutional.

Mississippi's religious freedom law has been declared unconstitutional. The law, HB 1523, allowed people to deny services to customers based on their religious views. Critics argued that this law discriminated against LGBT individuals.

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According to NPR, the state's governor Phil Bryant said he would appeal the judge's ruling, but the attorney general Jim Hood advised not to move forward. Under HB 1523, Mississippi locals could decline medical services to gay couples, refuse to serve a gay wedding, or fire employees based on their religious affiliations. Judge Carlton Reeves said that state employees were not allowed to deny marriage licenses to gay couples, as same-sex marriage is federally legal.

Yesterday, Reeves added that the law in general violated the First Amendment by promoting specific religious beliefs over other views, mainly that marriage is between a man and a woman, that sex is between a man and a woman, and that people should be determined by their birth anatomy and genetics. Reeves said that there are some heads of religious groups who do not denounce homosexuality or transgender people.

"There are almost endless explanations for how HB 1523 condones discrimination against the LGBT community, but in its simplest terms it denies LGBT citizens equal protection under the law," Reeves wrote.

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Reeves added that religious people are already protected under the First Amendment and Mississippi's Religious Freedom Restoration Act. He said HB 1523, which allows people protection from lawsuits if they deny services based on their faith, was not necessary.

Proponents of HB 1523 said it was created to protect them, but Attorney General Hood said that even before the law, religious leaders were never required to marry gay couples if they did not want to. He added that litigating this law is expensive and appealing would just add unnecessary cost to the state's budget crisis.

Do you think HB 1523 is necessary to protect religious freedom? Let us know in the comments below.

Source: NPR