

March 19, 2025

Hon. Andy Beshear
Governor of Kentucky
Office of the Governor of Kentucky
700 Capital Ave., Ste. 100
Frankfort, KY 40601

Re: Faith leaders support religious freedom, oppose House Joint Resolution 15

Dear Governor Beshear:

We are faith leaders from across Kentucky who value religious freedom for all. We urge you to veto House Joint Resolution 15, which requires that a Ten Commandments monument be displayed on the grounds of the Kentucky Capitol. We believe that this legislation is a misguided effort that will undermine the religious freedom we cherish as people of faith and leaders of faith communities.

We value your commitment to engaging Kentucky's diverse religious communities and talking openly about your own Christian faith. Kentuckians of all faiths should be free to enjoy their religious freedom, which is guaranteed by both the U.S. and Kentucky Constitutions

The government must respect the rights of individuals and faith communities to make decisions about the sacred texts that inform our religious understandings and practices. Laws mandating the display of the Ten Commandments on government property demean that freedom.

The text of the monument at issue in HJR 15 is not universal or inclusive of all faith traditions. Indeed, the monument's version of the Ten Commandments does not exist in any translation of the Bible, nor do the Ten Commandments as such hold religious meaning for hundreds of thousands or more of Kentuckians who are Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Unitarian Universalist, or who practice other religions or no religion at all. Matters of faith should remain in the family and in faith communities, and not in the hands of government officials.

HJR 15's demand that the monument be installed on the Capitol grounds is especially troubling. The Capitol is the seat of our state government and should be welcoming to all Kentuckians, regardless of their faith. Instead, by communicating the government's preference for some faiths, the monument undercuts the religious equality Kentuckians share and threatens to use the Ten Commandments as a symbol of exclusion and religious intolerance.

Kentuckians belong to a rich tapestry of faith communities and can freely practice their religion precisely because our laws prohibit the government from imposing, in any way, religious beliefs or doctrine on the people.

We therefore strongly urge you to advocate for and protect the rights of all Kentuckians and faith communities by vetoing HJR 15.

Sincerely,

1. Rev. Dr. Lauren Jones Mayfield, Executive Director, Center for Interfaith Relations
2. Rev. Dr. D. Anthony Everett, Elder, Kentucky Conference of the United Methodist Church
3. Zina Merkin, The Interfaith Alliance of the Bluegrass, Lexington, KY
4. Rev. Erin Phelps, Baptist minister, Louisville
5. Rev. Robert M. Fox, Jr. Executive Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Kentucky
6. Rev. James Todd Smith, Kentucky Council of Churches Justice and Advocacy Commission Chair; Kentucky Annual Conference Advocacy Team Chair, Pastor of Wesley United Methodist Church of Ludlow, KY
7. Rev. Patrick Long
8. Rev. Michael Ward, Lexington, Kentucky
9. Rev. Roger Jasper, Pastor, Living Faith Baptist Fellowship, Elizabethtown
10. Rev. Dr. Marian McClure Taylor, General Presbyter for Mid-Kentucky, PC(USA)
11. Rev. Sharon Felton, Congregational Advocacy Officer, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
12. Rev. Alex Lockridge, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Corbin
13. Rev. Amanda Smith, Co-Pastor, First Baptist Church on St. Clair, Frankfort
14. Chuck Powell, Minister for Youth/Families and Missions, Calvary Baptist Church, Lexington
15. Rev. Dr. Patrick DeVane, Senior Pastor, Georgetown Baptist Church, Georgetown
16. Rev. Lauren McDuffie, Pastor, Community Baptist Church, Henderson
17. Rev. Justin Sizemore, Associate Pastor to Youth and Young Adults, Highland Baptist Church, Louisville
18. Rev. Molly Shoulta Tucker, Senior Pastor, Ridgewood Baptist Church, Louisville
19. Rev. Dr. Kevin Gardner-Sinclair, Senior Pastor, Broadway Baptist Church, Louisville
20. Rev. Dr. Chris Caldwell, Former Senior Pastor, Broadway Baptist Church, Louisville
21. Rev. Rachel Small Stokes, Pastor, Immanuel United Church of Christ, Louisville
22. Alissa Vance, Minister to Youth, Broadway Baptist Church, Louisville
23. Rev. Ryan M. Eller, Beloved Community Foundation
24. Rev. Jordan Conley, Pastor, Crescent Hill Baptist Church, Louisville
25. Rev. Dr. Carol Harston, Baptist minister, Louisville
26. Rev. Benjamin S. Burton, Chaplain, Louisville
27. Dr. Mark S. Medley, Academic Dean, BSK Theological Seminary
28. Rev. Susan Reed, Associate Pastor, Broadway Baptist Church, Louisville
29. Rev. Dr. Emily Holladay, Senior Pastor, Immanuel Baptist Church, Frankfort

30. Rev. Mary Alice Birdwhistell, Louisville
31. Rev. Dr. Brian Chenowith, UU Church of Lexington, KY
32. Abby Sizemore, Director of Admissions, BSK Theological Seminary
33. Rev. Ashley Gill Harrington, Associate Pastor, Georgetown Baptist Church, Georgetown
34. Dr. Mark L. Thomas, Registrar, BSK Theological Seminary
35. Rev. Dr. Ben H. Stewart III, Honorably Retired PC(USA) Pastor and Chaplain
36. Rev. Aaron Austin, Associate Pastor, Central Baptist Church, Lexington, KY
37. Harry Conner, Chaplain, Louisville KY
38. Rev. Rainbow Weldon, Senior Minister, Ahava Center for Spiritual Living
39. Rev. Charles Conkin, Associate Pastor, Central Baptist Church, Lexington, KY
40. Rev. Zachary L. Bay, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Middlesboro, KY
41. Rev. Dr. Kristy L. Bay, Minister of Music, First Baptist Church, Middlesboro, KY
42. Rev. Sara Clarke Turpin, Senior Pastor, Buechel Park Baptist Church
43. J. Chris Sanders, Attorney and Deacon
44. Hannah Walker, Member and Spouse of the Pastor of Eminence Baptist Church
45. Rev. Clint Walker, Senior Pastor, Eminence Baptist Church, Eminence, KY
46. Rachel Sherron, Associate Pastor, Buechel Park Baptist Church
47. Samantha Barrett, Minister of Christian Education & Youth, Immanuel United Church of Christ, Louisville, KY
48. Rev. James Holladay, Pastor, Lyndon Baptist Church, Louisville, KY
49. Rev. Randy Rains, Associate Pastor, Immanuel Baptist Church, Paducah, KY
50. Rabbi Matt Derrenbacher, Assistant Rabbi, The Temple Congregation Adath Israel Brith Sholom
51. Di Kerrigan, co-founder Listen Learn Act
52. Rev. Chris Hughes
53. Rev. Dr. Ann Deibert, Pastor, Central Presbyterian Church, Louisville, KY
54. Rev. Lynn Wilson, Minister to Families, Eminence Baptist Church, Eminence, KY
55. Rabbi Ben Freed, Rabbi, Keneseth Israel Congregation, Louisville, KY
56. Rev. Amanda Langlands, Associate Minister, Broadway Baptist Church, Louisville, KY
57. Rabbi Laura Metzger
58. Rev. Jason Crosby, Baptist Minister and Chaplain, Louisville, KY
59. Rabbi Stanley R. Miles
60. Cantor David Lipp, Congregation Adath Jeshurun, Louisville, KY
61. Rev. Dr. Carol Ruthven, honorably retired priest, Episcopal Diocese of Lexington
62. Rev. Derek Cain, Pastor, Third Baptist Church, Owensboro, KY
63. Rev. Dr. Nancy Jo Kemper, retired Executive Director, Kentucky Council of Churches
64. Rev. Michael R. Duncan, Pastor Emeritus, Eminence Baptist Church, Eminence, KY.
65. Rabbi David Wirtschafter, Temple Adath Israel, Lexington, KY.
66. Trent Spoolstra, Director, Louisville Jewish Community Relations Council

67. Beth Salamon, Chair of the Jewish Community of Louisville and State Policy Advocate, National Council of Jewish Women Louisville Section
68. Rabbi David Ariel-Joel, The Temple - Congregation Adath Israel Brith Sholom, Louisville, KY
69. Rus Funk, Kentucky Unitarian Universalist Justice Action Network
70. Rev. Dr. Bryan Langlands, Assistant Vice President for Student Life and Campus Minister, Georgetown College
71. Rev. Aaron B. Coyle-Carr, Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church, Morehead
72. Mindy Haas, Executive Director, Jewish Federation of the Bluegrass
73. Rev. Dr. David S. Adams, Pastor, The Living Faith Church of Northern KY
74. Rev. Chris Cash, Senior Minister, First Christian Church, Georgetown
75. Rabbi Shani Abramowitz, Ohavay Zion Synagogue, Lexington, KY
76. Rev. Robert Tucker, Lead Pastor, Watkins United Methodist Church, Louisville, KY
77. Rev. Dr. Keith R. Felton, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Winchester, KY
78. Rev. Laura Vincent, Greenwood Campus Pastor, Broadway United Methodist Church, Bowling Green, KY
79. Rev. Dr. John W. Campbell, Buechel Park Baptist Church, Louisville, KY