

North Carolina's absurd anti-discrimination bill isn't the final word

By [Lee Hull Moses](#)

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I love North Carolina. I'm not a native, but I've been here for a while now. The midwesterner in me still thrills at the possibility of a day trip to the mountains or the beach. I regularly try to convince my friends to move here. It's a great place, I tell them ... except for the state legislature.

Last week, the legislature outdid itself in embarrassing the state in front of the rest of the country, a feat it has perfected in recent years. On Wednesday, in the span of just a few hours, and with no time for public discussion, [lawmakers pushed through a bill](#) [pdf] that legalizes discrimination against LGBTQ people. The governor signed it into law that night.

The bill was a response to a Charlotte city ordinance allowing people to use the public restroom of the gender with which they identify. Apparently having no other problems to tackle (the rate of childhood hunger here is among the highest in the nation; teacher pay is among the lowest), elected officials called an emergency session to block the ordinance.

The bill, dubbed HB2 or "The Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act," requires people to use the restroom of the sex assigned to them at birth. HB2 also creates a blanket anti-discrimination law for the whole state, and prohibits local municipalities from making their own anti-discrimination ordinances. But the law specifically leaves out gay and lesbian people as a protected class and restricts the definition of a person's sex to what is listed on his or her birth certificate—leaving the door wide open for discrimination against transgender people. This bill supersedes any already existing local laws, which means it is now legal in North Carolina to discriminate against LGBTQ people for any reason at all.

The absurdities of this law are myriad: Will we now have to show our birth certificates at the door of public restrooms? An anti-discrimination law that prohibits further anti-discrimination laws itself defies logic. [This tweet](#) from a North Carolina trans man points out the nonsensical nature of the law, which actually requires men

to use the women's restroom if the "biological sex" listed on their birth certificate is female.

There's a line from Disney's version of *Beauty and the Beast* that comes back to me at times like this. When the villagers go off to hunt the beast, with pitchforks and torches in hand, they sing in unison, "We don't like what we don't understand; in fact, it scares us."

The hurried and frenzied way this bill came to pass leaves little doubt that the lawmakers were not interested in understanding but were acting out of fear—of not being reelected, perhaps. I suspect that few of the lawmakers who voted for the bill have taken the time to hear the story of a transgender person, and that most are simply afraid of the ways that the world is changing.

The evening after HB2 passed, my congregation gathered for a Maundy Thursday foot-washing service and shared the communion feast. On Friday, we prayed for all the brokenness of the world.

On Saturday, we waited. It seemed that the powers of evil and fear had won again.

But I know this to be true: the Christ who knelt and washed his disciples' dusty feet would not likely have cared which bathroom anybody used. The Christ whose hospitality and service crossed all cultural barriers would weep at the ways we blatantly leave people out. The God who became incarnate in human flesh and died on a cross knew something about the complicated and wondrous nature of bodies. The God who created us in the divine image would surely want each of us to be fully ourselves, in all our glorious humanness.

There has been a groundswell of opposition to HB2 from nearly every direction. North Carolinians decried the law and mounted protests. Companies across the country are threatening to withdraw business from the state. A lawsuit is challenging the constitutionality of the law. [Religious leaders](#) are [speaking out](#). The message is clear: This will not stand.

On Sunday morning, the tomb was empty. Christ is risen, we declared. Christ is risen indeed. The good news of Easter is that weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes in the morning.

Love, ever more powerful than fear, will always rise.