

ADF to Iowa Civil Rights Commission: Not Good Enough

A lawsuit filed on behalf of a Des Moines, Iowa, pastor will continue to move forward, despite assurances from the Iowa Civil Rights Commission that it will not interfere in the religious liberty of churches in the state.

Alliance Defending Freedom attorney Christiana Holcomb said the commission's release of a minor revision to its publication titled *A Public Accommodations Provider's Guide to Iowa Law* fails to alleviate concerns regarding the state law in question. In the lawsuit *Fort Des Moines Church of Christ v. Jackson*, she argues the law is too vague and could harm religious liberty in the state.

"Cosmetic changes to the alarming language in one brochure won't fix the unconstitutionality of the Iowa Civil Rights Act," she said. "Churches should be free to communicate their religious beliefs and operate their houses of worship according to their faith without fearing government punishment. The Iowa Civil Rights Commission had no constitutional basis for including explicit threats against houses of worship in any of its materials."

Holcomb added that while the commission was right to "remove some of the most disturbing language" in its brochure, that change doesn't fix the "inherent problem" with the Iowa Civil Rights Act that forms the basis of the lawsuit. That is that the act gives the ICRC the power to determine what parts of a church's activities do not have a "bona fide religious purpose," and are thereby subject to the act's prohibitions.

"No state or local law should threaten free speech and the free exercise of religion as protected by the First Amendment," she said. "Because the Iowa law does that, ADF

will continue to challenge the law to bring certainty to Iowa churches.”