

This State's Lawmakers Approve a Bill to Protect Christian Businesses From Persecution

Despite protests outside the Mississippi State Capitol, legislators inside took the first steps to pass a bill that will protect Christians and their businesses from persecution.

The Protecting Freedom of Conscience from Government Discrimination Act was passed by the House of Representatives on Friday by a 68-44 margin. It faced a final vote—more or less, a formality—Monday evening to send the legislation to Gov. Phil Bryant for his signature.

Bryant has not yet said whether or not he intends to sign the legislation.

House Bill 1523, as the legislation is officially referred to, was authored by Speaker of the House Philip Gunn (R-Clinton). It would allow business and government workers to deny services based on their sincerely held religious beliefs.

It was drafted in response to last year's U.S. Supreme Court opinion in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which effectively legalized same-sex "marriage" nationwide. Several opposition groups have been protesting the proposed legislation, which they say only provides cover for discrimination.

Among those protesting are the Human Rights Campaign, the American Civil Liberties Union of Mississippi, and Blossom Brown, which calls itself an LGBT equality advocacy group.