

July 21st, 2021

To Members of the Louisiana Legislature:

Our sacred texts teach us how we should behave toward one another -- that we must love one another as we love ourselves, that we must protect the vulnerable in our society, that we must recognize God's image in everyone.

The Bible has special words of instruction about impulses toward cruelty. Among them is a teaching about the nation of Amalek, the greatest enemy of the Israelites precisely because the Amalekite soldiers attacked from the rear, accosting the famished and the weary in the midst of a brave and perilous journey. It was this opportunism that revealed the hardness of their hearts, and neither God nor the people forgot.

Senate Bill 156, the so-called "Fairness in Women's Sports Act," is our legislature's version of an Amalekite attack. The bill is full of cowardice and meanness and does nothing to make our shared society better. It is cynical and frivolous, seeking to extract political advantage by playing upon people's prejudices and fears. Worse than its lack of utility in addressing any actual problem in Louisiana, the bill is cruel.

Senate Bill 156 targets those least able to defend themselves -- trans children, who are among the most vulnerable young people in our society, the most likely to be depressed, commit suicide and be victimized by peers. These children of God deserve our support and love and affirmation as they grow into adults, not our ridicule and scorn.

For these reasons we applaud Governor Edwards' veto of Senate Bill 156, and we pray that legislators, especially those guided by their faiths, will vote to uphold the veto. It would be unconscionable, in light of all the urgent issues facing the people of Louisiana, to devote any more precious time and energy to what is essentially a political ploy, happening at the expense of children.

Let us come together instead to ensure that Louisiana's children have food, shelter, education and love -- the things mandated by the tenets of all our faiths and the only foundation upon which it will prove possible to build a stronger, more prosperous State.

Sincerely,

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Rev. Karli D. Pidgeon, Lake Charles District Superintendent (United Methodist)

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Bishop Michael Rinehart, Southern Louisiana (Lutheran)

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