

Division of Human Rights
Office of the Attorney General of Virginia
202 North Ninth Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Attorney General Herring,

I am writing to bring your attention to an ongoing practice of discrimination in many Virginia counties. As you may be aware, ministers and religious representatives performing marriage in the Commonwealth must first register with a county clerk's office. On its face, this is not a problem, but my experiences have shown me that this process is administered in an arbitrary manner throughout the state.

Many people who qualify under Va. Code §20-23, myself included, are told that they cannot register if the clerk's office employee does not approve of their church - a clear violation of our religious liberties. I was ordained in a non-traditional way; but even with the support of my mother church, the blessing of my congregation, and having the care of two committed souls that are ready to wed, many local clerk's office would refuse to allow me to register as an officiant.

This discrimination has forced many ministers of my denomination to travel across the state, to register in a county that does not prescribe a religious litmus test. I am not alone in this experience. The religious discrimination directed at me also impacts the thousands of other AMM Ministers in Virginia, and countless other non-traditional religious officials. The unequal treatment we suffer on account of our faith is unjust. I call upon you to help standardize religious officiant application procedures, to ensure equality across Virginia, or to do away with the registration policy all together.

Sincerely,