

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF WHEELING AFFIRMING ITS
SUPPORT FOR THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF ALL OF ITS RESIDENTS**

WHEREAS, as of the date hereof, there are only seven U.S. states that provide no protections whatsoever against LGBTQ+ discrimination within their borders: Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Alabama, Idaho, South Dakota, and West Virginia; and

WHEREAS, in West Virginia, because of the absence of action by the State Legislature, 18 cities, including the City of Wheeling, have adopted ordinances that provide protections against housing and employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity; and

WHEREAS, Wheeling's LGBTQ+ non-discrimination ordinance was approved by City Council unanimously in December 2016 after months of debate and public input; and

WHEREAS, in the six years following its passage, the City of Wheeling has experienced an era of unprecedented public and private investment while also expanding its tourism and entertainment options, including bringing two major basketball tournaments to WesBanco Arena; and

WHEREAS, during the current legislative session, both houses of the West Virginia Legislature have approved House Bill 3042, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), which permits one's religious beliefs to be used as an excuse to violate the civil rights of others; and

WHEREAS, if enacted into law, RFRA could permit anyone to sue to be exempt from following municipal laws or policies, such as the City of Wheeling's nondiscrimination ordinance, if he or she believes such law or policy burdens his or her religious beliefs; and

WHEREAS, while we fully support the 1st Amendment protections enshrined in the U.S. Constitution for the religious freedoms of Americans, we do not believe that citizens should be permitted to use their religious beliefs as a pretext for violating the basic civil rights of other citizens; and

WHEREAS, in 2015, the state of Indiana passed similar legislation that ultimately caused its capital city, Indianapolis, to lose twelve conventions and roughly \$60 million in economic impact; and

WHEREAS, enacting RFRA would make it harder for West Virginia state officials and local governments to attract business and investment within our borders and reverse the outmigration of young people that has defined our communities for decades; and

WHEREAS, on February 10, 2021, the editorial page of the Wheeling Intelligencer echoed the sentiment that West Virginia must respect the civil rights of all of its citizens as follows: "[West Virginia] lawmakers need to be honest with themselves and their constituents about *all* the reasons

West Virginia has found it difficult to attract and retain young people. It's not all broadband internet access and shiny new roads. Deep down, they know it.”; and

WHEREAS, we know it too, and we continue to believe that in the City of Wheeling, nobody should be turned away from a business, denied housing, or refused service by government officials because of who they are or who they love.

Now therefore, **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Council of the City of Wheeling hereby urges Governor Jim Justice to veto House Bill 3042 and avoid the loss of business, investment, and civil liberties associated with so-called “religious freedom” bills in other states.

Glenn F. Elliott Jr., Mayor