



March 16, 2021

The Honorable Richard Durbin
Chairman
Committee on Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

cc: Members of the United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary

Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Grassley & Judiciary Members:

We are writing to express our support and appreciation for the efforts to more fully provide the LGBT community with civil and human rights protections. For far too long, this community has endured mistreatment in American society, including within parts of the church. We regret and lament our collective misdeeds and omissions in that regard. While we maintain the historic Christian sexual ethic, we want to clearly state our support for federal protections for LGBT persons in employment, housing and the like. We're committed to embracing and advocating for those safeguards.

Unfortunately, the collaborative process and substance of the Equality Act fall well beneath the standard necessary to cultivate a healthy pluralistic society. While we support certain provisions, the legislation, on the whole, is not the product of a thoughtful and healthy civic dialogue or a transparent policy-making process. It was not discussed in detail with a diverse set of faith leaders who'll bear the brunt of its excesses and who worked hard to elect you and President Joe Biden. It's a danger not just to Christian institutions, but those belonging to our



Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist, and Muslim neighbors as well. We can defend the rights of the LGBT community without threatening religious communities.

The Equality Act is a reflection of our broken system, not an example of the civic spirit and good faith measures necessary to heal it. It would remove many of the basic rights that allow religious organizations to operate according to the tenets of their faith. It would allow LGBT rights to be used as a sword against faith institutions rather than a shield to protect the vulnerable. In addition to failing to offer religious protections to religious institutions, the Equality Act would likely:

- Revoke federal security, disaster relief, and school lunch money from thousands of religious schools.
- End federal partnerships with thousands of faith-based programs that serve the most vulnerable.
- Revoke the Pell Grant and federal loan eligibility for tens of thousands of students that attend hundreds of religious colleges.
- Convert houses of worship and other religious properties into public accommodations, enmeshing them in constant litigation.

The Fairness for All Act is a much more thoughtful and just way to protect our LGBT neighbors. It's a product of the faith community and the LGBT community coming together and challenging themselves to find ways to co-exist and to promote tolerance. It's proof that religious liberty and LGBT rights are not mutually exclusive. We should, and can, have both. Black and Brown Christians worked too hard for the Civil Rights Act to have it revised in ways that would take away basic rights and funding from our communities. The Equality Act needlessly pits the concerns of diverse communities against each other.

We, therefore, call upon you to support the Fairness for All Act and allow for a full debate and vote on the legislation.

Sincerely,



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