



**Joint Statement Regarding the Equality Act
on Behalf of Christian Schools and Educators
February 24, 2021**

The **American Association of Christian Schools (AACCS)** and the **Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)**, representing over 3,000 Christian schools and many hundreds of thousands of students and families, join to express their deep concern about the deceptively named Equality Act (HR 5) which attempts to mandate a single government-approved vision of human sexuality that brooks no exceptions. The bill achieves this uniform mandate of belief by two principal means: first, its exclusion of any exemption for genuine religious viewpoints to the contrary; second, its explicit ban on the use of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) to assert a defense for a religious viewpoint contrary to government mandate.

Even at first blush, the Equality Act is so extreme that, unlike almost all state and local sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) requirements, it allows *no exemptions* for religious non-profits. It does not stop there: it explicitly bans any appeal to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) which merely gives a religious entity its day in court when faith and government policy conflict. It is the very opposite of a good faith attempt to allow diversity of opinion and respect for those who disagree.

The Equality Act is fundamentally an attack on human dignity and diversity of belief. Its supporters must know and fully appreciate the bill's totalitarian impulse by their explicit refusal to allow for religious and moral citizens the ability to live according to their beliefs. By contrast, Christian schools teach a consistent message of human flourishing held by millions of humans over millennia grounded in biblical teachings of God's love for every person, each of whom is made in His image. This legislation threatens the ability of our schools and educators to share this Good News and to live according to those positive, hope-filled Divine standards.

Our concern is real: some states have already banned faith-based foster and adoption agencies from performing their mission based entirely on their faith-informed view of marriage. Those states choose bigotry over children-in-need even in desperate times. The Equality Act imposes a similar threat to faith-based entities whose views on sexuality and marriage accord with what Justice Kennedy described in *Obergefell* as views that "long [have] been held—and continue to be held—in good faith by reasonable and sincere people."

AACS and ACSI respectfully appeal to Congress: Please consider this as an opportunity to listen to the voices of people who are desperate to be heard, who care deeply about doing the right thing, and who want very much to see unity genuinely expressed by our elected officials. HR 5, by contrast, is an extremely divisive measure and intentionally forces conflict between people who have sincere but opposing views. Don't let the Equality Act sacrifice the common good on the altar of government-imposed viewpoints. Respect those who uphold the truth about human sexuality and marriage. Do not allow a one-size-fits-all government mandate to abolish the diversity of viewpoints, especially those based on human dignity as expressed in the Judeo-Christian reality.

Jamison Coppola, Government Relations Director
American Association of Christian Schools

George Tryfiates, Director for Government Affairs
Association of Christian Schools International