April 1, 2019

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler                 The Honorable Doug Collins  
Chairman                                      Ranking Member  
Committee on the Judiciary                    Committee on the Judiciary  
United States House of Representatives       United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515                         Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Nadler and Ranking Member Collins,

We write on behalf of millions of Americans who are deeply concerned about the harms of the Equality Act, which hinders quality health care, endangers the privacy and safety of women and girls, regulates free speech, severely undermines religious freedom, and threatens charitable nonprofits and the people they serve. H.R. 5 does not accomplish what its supporters maintain, but it causes new problems and will hurt more people than its sponsors want to help.

As people of faith, we believe that all people should be treated with equal dignity and respect. Religious groups were at the forefront of upholding these principles during our country’s civil rights movement, and people of faith continue to fight against the scourge of racism that unfortunately continues to this day.

People of faith serve the marginalized—and therefore uphold the dignity of every human person—through numerous charitable endeavors, including in the health care sector. H.R. 5 would unfortunately threaten the incredible work that faith-based hospitals and healthcare professionals do in the United States. While religiously affiliated hospitals routinely serve—and heal—patients of any background, including those who identify as LGBT, healthcare providers simply cannot perform every procedure that a patient requests. H.R. 5 would mandate that all health care professionals and providers perform gender transition procedures that go against many such providers’ best medical judgment, not to mention their deeply held moral or religious convictions.

H.R. 5 would also unfortunately undermine civil rights for women and girls by opening restrooms, locker rooms, and shower facilities to biological males who identify as female. Women and girls deserve access to private spaces when they visit their local gym or use the restroom while dining out, but H.R. 5 would undermine legitimate privacy and safety concerns that women have about sharing sex-specific facilities with a biological man who identifies as a woman. H.R. 5 also threatens to halt the advances women’s sports have achieved since the passage of Title IX in 1972 by allowing those with physical advantages to compete against women and obtain scholarships and other awards at the expense of women.

Americans highly value our First Amendment freedoms of speech, association, and the free exercise of religion. H.R. 5 puts these cherished liberties at risk first and foremost by explicitly carving out the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), which would be the first time RFRA has ever been curtailed since President Clinton signed this important statute into law in 1993. H.R. 5 would also subject private employers and others to expensive lawsuits if they fail to adhere to strict preferred pronoun policies.
This would affect not only small, family-owned businesses but also charities and other nonprofits that are organized with a specific mission. H.R. 5 would cause mission-driven employers, including religious schools, to have to abandon their mission when it comes to hiring certain employees or having employee conduct standards. Under H.R. 5, women’s shelters would be forced to house biological men who identify as women, despite the privacy and safety concerns that women staying in those shelters have about sharing sleeping quarters and other intimate facilities with the opposite sex.

Because of these many concerns, and others, we oppose H.R. 5 and respectfully urge you to oppose it as well.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Farris  
President, CEO, & General Counsel  
Alliance Defending Freedom

Tim Wildmon  
President  
American Family Association

Mike Rouse, PhD  
President  
American Association of Christian Schools

Terry Schilling  
Executive Director  
American Principles Project

Len Munsil, JD  
President  
Arizona Christian University

Ralph E. Enlow, Jr  
President  
The Association for Biblical Higher Education

Thomas J. Cathey, EdD  
Chief of Staff  
Association of Christian Schools International

David Goodwin  
President  
The Association of Classical Christian Schools

Jim Towey  
President  
Ave Maria University

William K. Thierfelder, PhD  
President  
Belmont Abbey College

Patrick J. Reilly  
President  
The Cardinal Newman Society

Edward Crites, Esq.  
President  
Catholic Bar Association

Brittany Vessely  
Executive Director  
Catholic Education Partners
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title and Affiliation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen Neher, LISW-S</td>
<td>President &amp; Cofounder Catholic Social Workers’ National Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Garvey</td>
<td>President The Catholic University of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Rice Hasson, JD</td>
<td>Director Catholic Women’s Forum at EPPC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas White</td>
<td>President &amp; Professor of Theology Cedarville University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. Derek McCoy</td>
<td>Executive Vice President Center for Urban Renewal and Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dondi E. Costin, PhD</td>
<td>President Charleston Southern University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Bryant, PhD</td>
<td>Executive Vice President &amp; Professor of Christian Studies Charleston Southern University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bernardine Clark</td>
<td>Head of School Chelsea Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David J. Beskar</td>
<td>Superintendent &amp; Headmaster Chesterton Academy of the Twin Cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Nammo</td>
<td>Executive Director &amp; CEO Christian Legal Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rabbi Pesach Lerner</td>
<td>President Coalition for Jewish Values</td>
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<tr>
<td>Penny Nance</td>
<td>CEO &amp; President Concerned Women for America LAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kevin Walters</td>
<td>Campus Minister Detroit Catholic Central High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Nalepa</td>
<td>President Everest Collegiate High School &amp; Academy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timothy Head</td>
<td>Executive Director Faith &amp; Freedom Coalition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Weber</td>
<td>President &amp; CEO Family Policy Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travis Weber</td>
<td>Vice President of Policy Family Research Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharon Slater</td>
<td>President &amp; CEO Family Watch International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Sean O. Sheridan, TOR</td>
<td>President Franciscan University of Steubenville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken Bruce Kemper, PhD</td>
<td>President Grace Christian University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Anthony W. Allen
President
Hannibal-LaGrange University

Tim Chapman
Executive Director
Heritage Action for America

Therese Maciag
Principal
Holy Cross Academy

Tim Kotyuk
Principal
Huron Valley Catholic School

Patrick S.J. Carmack, Esq.
Executive Director
Ignatius-Angelicum Great Books Program

Brad Grinstead
Headmaster
Immaculate Heart of Mary School

Michael J. Van Hecke
President
Institute for Catholic Liberal Education

Mark Tooley
President
Institute on Religion and Democracy

Nathanael Rea
Headmaster
John Paul the Great Academy

Derry Connolly
President
John Paul the Great Catholic University

Mary Rowles
Executive Director
Kolbe Academy

Matthew D. Staver
Founder & Chairman
Liberty Counsel

Jonathan Alexandre
Director of Public Policy
Liberty Counsel Action

Rick Brewer, PhD
President
Louisiana College

Gregory P. Seltz, PhD
Executive Director
Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty

Luke A. Macik, JD
Headmaster
The Lyceum

Ken Kruithof
Chief Operating Officer
Miracle Hill Ministries

Timothy E. Trainor, PhD
President
Mount St. Mary’s University

Eileen Cubanski
Executive Director
National Association of Private Catholic and Independent Schools

Benjamin Merkle
President
New Saint Andrews College

George Harne
President
Northeast Catholic College
Gene C. Fant, Jr, PhD  
President  
North Greenville University

Aaron Baer  
President  
Citizens for Community Values  
Ohio’s Family Policy Council

Everett Piper, PhD  
President  
Oklahoma Wesleyan University

Todd R. Flanders, PhD  
Headmaster  
Providence Academy

Randall Pierce  
Principal  
Queen of Heaven Academy

Rita McCormick  
President & Principal  
Quigley Catholic High School

Christopher Keefe  
Headmaster  
Regina Coeli Academy

M. Denise D’Attore, PhD  
Head of School  
Regina Luminis Academy

Veronica Murphy  
Head of School  
Royalmont Academy

Scott J. Baier  
Head of School  
Royal Palm Academy

Thomas Ellis  
President of the Board  
Saint Augustine Academy

Anthony Biese  
TK-12 Headmaster  
Saint Joseph Academy

Stephen M. Krason, JD, PhD  
President  
Society of Catholic Social Scientists

Russell Moore, PhD  
President  
Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

Keith Kiser  
Headmaster  
Saint Joseph’s Catholic School

Catherine LeBlanc  
Vice-Principal  
Saint Thomas More Academy

Kristan Hawkins  
President  
Students for Life Action

Michael F. McLean, PhD  
President  
Thomas Aquinas College

William Fahey, PhD  
President  
Thomas More College of Liberal Arts

Samuel W. Oliver, PhD  
President  
Union University
Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, DD
Archbishop of Louisville
Chairman, USCCB Committee
for Religious Liberty

Most Reverend James D. Conley
Bishop of Lincoln
Chairman, USCCB Subcommittee
for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage

Most Reverend Frank J. Dewane
Bishop of Venice
Chairman, USCCB Committee on
Domestic Justice and Human Development

Monsignor James P. Shea
President
University of Mary

Richard Nye
President & Cofounder
Veritas Christi Catholic High School

Diane Kelly Cavazos
Foundress & President
Veritas Preparatory School

Jo Anne Lyon
Ambassador & General Superintendent Emerita
The Wesleyan Church

John Jackson, PhD
President
William Jessup University

Glenn C. Arbery, PhD
President
Wyoming Catholic College