April 8, 2019

The Honorable Suzanne Bonamici
Chair
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services
Committee on Education & Labor
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Comer
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services
Committee on Education & Labor
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Bonamici and Ranking Member Comer,

We write on behalf of millions of Americans who are deeply concerned about the harms of the Equality Act, which undermines religious freedom, and threatens charitable nonprofits and the people they serve, regulates free speech, hinders quality health care, and endangers the privacy and safety of women and girls. H.R. 5 does not accomplish what its supporters maintain, and 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. Faith-based adoption and foster care agencies would also have to face the unenviable choice of either abandoning the deeply held religious beliefs that inspired them to serve vulnerable children in the first place—or be shut down by government entities. The forced closures of such agencies make no sense at a time when the opioid crisis is increasing the number of children in need of foster care and adoption.

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

Stephen D. Livesay, PhD
President
Bryan College

Patrick J. Reilly
President
The Cardinal Newman Society
Edward Crites, Esq.  
President  
Catholic Bar Association

Brittany Vessely  
Executive Director  
Catholic Education Partners

Kathleen Neher, LISW-S  
President & Cofounder  
Catholic Social Workers’ National Association

John Garvey  
President  
The Catholic University of America

Mary Rice Hasson, JD  
Director  
Catholic Women’s Forum at EPPC

Thomas White  
President & Professor of Theology  
Cedarville University

Rev. Derek McCoy  
Executive Vice President  
Center for Urban Renewal and Education

Dondi E. Costin, PhD  
President  
Charleston Southern University

Michael Bryant, PhD  
Executive Vice President &  
Professor of Christian Studies  
Charleston Southern University

Bernardine Clark  
Head of School  
Chelsea Academy

David J. Beskar  
Superintendent & Headmaster  
Chesterton Academy of the Twin Cities

David Nammo  
Executive Director & CEO  
Christian Legal Society

Rabbi Pesach Lerner  
President  
Coalition for Jewish Values

Penny Nance  
CEO & President  
Concerned Women for America LAC

Kevin Walters  
Campus Minister  
Detroit Catholic Central High School

Mike Nalepa  
President  
Everest Collegiate High School & Academy

Timothy Head  
Executive Director  
Faith & Freedom Coalition

Peggy Nienaber  
Vice President  
Faith & Liberty

Paul Weber  
President & CEO  
Family Policy Alliance

Travis Weber  
Vice President of Policy  
Family Research Council
Sharon Slater  
President & CEO  
Family Watch International

Mark Tooley  
President  
Institute on Religion and Democracy

Fr. Sean O. Sheridan, TOR  
President  
Franciscan University of Steubenville

Nathanael Rea  
Headmaster  
John Paul the Great Academy

Ken Bruce Kemper, PhD  
President  
Grace Christian University

Derry Connolly  
President  
John Paul the Great Catholic University

Anthony W. Allen  
President  
Hannibal-LaGrange University

Mary Rowles  
Executive Director  
Kolbe Academy

Tim Chapman  
Executive Director  
Heritage Action for America

Mathew D. Staver  
Founder & Chairman  
Liberty Counsel

Therese Maciag  
Principal  
Holy Cross Academy

Jonathan Alexandre  
Director of Public Policy  
Liberty Counsel Action

Tim Kotyuk  
Principal  
Huron Valley Catholic School

Rick Brewer, PhD  
President  
Louisiana College

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

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

Brad Grinstead  
Headmaster  
Immaculate Heart of Mary School

Luke A. Macik, JD  
Headmaster  
The Lyceum

Michael J. Van Hecke  
President  
Institute for Catholic Liberal Education

Ken Kruithof  
Chief Operating Officer  
Miracle Hill Ministries
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