



COLORADO CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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A Letter to the Faithful from the Bishops of Colorado

The proposed Equality Act of 2021 (H.R. 5) forces Americans to conform to government-mandated beliefs about human sexuality that are contrary to Catholic social teaching and pose a great threat to religious freedom.

The Catholic Church teaches that each person should be treated with dignity, respect, and compassion, as each person is made in the image of God. The Equality Act claims to ban discrimination based on “sexual orientation” and “gender identity.” However, it actually *codifies discrimination* against anyone with a different belief about human sexuality and forces them to conform to government-mandated beliefs about sexual orientation and gender identity under threat of criminal and financial penalties.

If the Equality Act is signed into law, the Catholic Church’s social teaching on human sexuality will be effectively outlawed as discriminatory and many of the Church’s institutions and faithful could be accused of violating this law.

Proponents compare the Equality Act to the Civil Rights movement. While the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibited state-sanctioned discrimination against African Americans, the Equality Act is different. Laws that eliminated Jim Crow and promoted racial equality, and laws that promoted equality on the basis of biological sex (male and female), are *not* comparable to sexual orientation and gender identity.¹ Race and biological sex are objective realities. “Sexual orientation” and “gender identity,”² as understood within the Equality Act, are *subjective perceptions* of individual realities and therefore *should not* be included as a protected class in federal civil rights law that protects individuals against race or sex discrimination. Unlike the Black community in the Jim Crow era, those in the LGBTQ community are *not* treated as second-class citizens. The government forcing others to condone or facilitate LGBTQ beliefs is a violation of the First Amendment’s most sacred freedom of conscience and religious liberty. That is precisely what the Equality Act would do.

For instance, Catholic Charities adoption agencies hold the conviction based on Catholic teaching and scientific research that children deserve both a mother and a father. There are distinct differences between biological sexes that distinguish mothering and fathering. The sincerely held belief, based on religious conviction and science, that men and women are not interchangeable, and mothers and fathers are not replaceable, is not an affront to sexual orientation.³ An organization’s preference to place children with a mother and father is not discrimination and the law should not penalize any individual or organization for making a decision based on their well-founded conviction. If the Equality Act is enacted, Catholic Charities, and other like-minded businesses and nonprofits, will be forced to choose between their well-founded convictions and serving the community — or they could be prosecuted for violating the law.

¹ Anderson, R. T. (2019). *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*. New York: Encounter Books.

² Terms used reflect their meaning within the 2021 Equality Act H.R. 5. To read more about the Catholic Church’s teaching on gender ideology see: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/document/collaboration-of-men-and-women-in-the-church-and-in-the-world-34>

³ *ibid* Anderson (2019).

The Equality Act would inflict numerous legal and social harms on Americans of all beliefs. The Act even includes an abortion mandate, which violates the most precious right to life.

If enacted, this legislation would:

- punish faith-based charities such as shelters and foster care agencies, and in turn their thousands of beneficiaries, simply because of their beliefs on marriage and sexuality (§§ 3, 6);
- force both people and organizations in many everyday life and work settings to speak or act in support of “gender transitions,” including health care workers and licensed counselors, even when it’s against their professional judgment (§§ 3, 6, 7);
- risk mandating taxpayers to pay for abortions, and health care workers with conscience objections to perform them, ultimately ending more human lives (§§ 3, 6, 9);
- force girls and women to compete against boys and men for limited opportunities in school sports, and to share locker rooms and shower spaces with biological males who claim to identify as women (§§ 6, 9);
- expand the government’s definition of public places into numerous settings, even forcing religiously operated spaces, such as some church halls and equivalent facilities owned by synagogues or mosques, to either host functions that violate their beliefs or close their doors to their broader communities (§ 3);
- exclude people from the careers and livelihoods that they love, just for maintaining the truth of their beliefs on marriage and sexuality (§ 3); and
- discriminate against individuals and religious organizations based on their different beliefs by partially repealing the bipartisan Religious Freedom Restoration Act, an unprecedented departure from that law and one of America’s founding principles (§ 9).⁴

The Equality Act does not promote human dignity and equality, rather it divides our country and codifies discrimination against Catholic faithful, religious communities, and others with different beliefs on human sexuality and marriage. It is imperative that Americans of all backgrounds and beliefs, especially Catholics, contact their U.S. Senators to **vote against the Equality Act H.R. 5**. The future of America’s first and most sacred right depends on it.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila
Archbishop of Denver

Most Reverend Stephen J. Berg
Bishop of Pueblo

Most Reverend Michael J. Sheridan
Bishop of Colorado Springs

Most Reverend Jorge Rodriguez
Auxiliary Bishop of Denver

⁴ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2021, February 24). Letter to Congress on the Equality Act. https://www.usccb.org/resources/Letter_to_Congress_on_Equality_Act_Feb_23_2021