April 1, 2019

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

The Honorable Doug Collins
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States House of Representatives
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
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The Association for Biblical Higher Education

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Association of Christian Schools International

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Brittany Vessely
Executive Director
Catholic Education Partners
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<tr>
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Hannibal-LaGrange University

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Liberty Counsel

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Executive Director
Heritage Action for America

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Director of Public Policy
Liberty Counsel Action

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Holy Cross Academy

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Huron Valley Catholic School

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Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty

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Executive Director
Ignatius-Angelicum Great Books Program

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The Lyceum

Brad Grinstead
Headmaster
Immaculate Heart of Mary School

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Miracle Hill Ministries

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President
Mount St. Mary’s University

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Institute on Religion and Democracy

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Executive Director
National Association of Private Catholic and Independent Schools

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John Paul the Great Academy

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New Saint Andrews College

Derry Connolly
President
John Paul the Great Catholic University

George Harne
President
Northeast Catholic College

Mary Rowles
Executive Director
Kolbe Academy
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<td>Union University</td>
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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
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University of Mary

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President & Cofounder
Veritas Christi Catholic High School

Diane Kelly Cavazos
Foundress & President
Veritas Preparatory School

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The Wesleyan Church

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