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LOUISIANA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS URGES THE U.S. SENATE TO OPPOSE THE EQUALITY ACT

As the Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops (LCCB), we seek to implore our collective U.S. senators to oppose the Equality Act that has already passed the U.S. House of Representatives. While promoted as an anti-discrimination and protective measure, this legislation could disrupt and endanger the Gospel-based work that the Catholic Church engages in on a daily basis.

Catholic Teaching is rooted in the foundational principle of the life and dignity of the human person. Human dignity is based on the reality that all human beings are made in the image and likeness of God, and that each should be treated accordingly. Entering into relationships with human beings that are based on compassion and respect, is embodied within the charitable work of our Church directed toward all people. Our ministry is universal (catholic) because it is an outward expression of the fact that we are uniquely Catholic, regardless of whether or not those whom we serve share our Catholicity.

The Equality Act, while purporting to counter discrimination and protect classes of individuals, in reality discriminates against people, organizations and institutions who operate out of a direct expression of their faith. If passed, the Equality Act would discriminate in the following ways:

- Punish faith-based charities such as shelters and foster care agencies and those that they serve, simply due to their beliefs on marriage and sexuality;
- Mandate taxpayers to fund abortions, regardless of their objection;
- Place health care workers in situations in which they would have to violate their conscience in an effort to fulfill their job duties;
- Force girls and women to compete against boys and men for limited opportunities in sports and to share locker room and shower spaces with biological males who identify as females;
- Alter how the government defines "public places," such that even spaces operated by religious organizations (i.e. church halls and equivalent spaces owned by synagogues or mosques) would be compelled to choose between either hosting functions that violate their beliefs or shutter their operation that may serve the greater community;
- Partially repeal the bipartisan Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which would enable discrimination against individuals and organizations based on their religious beliefs.

The Catholic Church in the United States is the largest non-government provider of human services. Within our own province, the Catholic Church provides life-giving and life-affirming services to innumerable children, women, men, and families through our parishes, schools, hospitals, shelters, food banks, and Catholic Charities agencies regardless of the individuals' beliefs. We are a church rooted in the Gospel, and therefore rooted in service for the greater good of the communities to whom we minister. If passed, legislation such as this could further divide our already polarized nation and be an insurmountable detriment to the work that we do, which is an expression of our commitment to protecting human dignity for all. We therefore encourage the U.S. Senate to oppose the Equality Act.

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