



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR
THERAPEUTIC & COUNSELLING CHOICE

7th June, 2019

The Ambassador of the United States to the Court of St James

The U.S. Embassy London
33 Nine Elms Lane
London, SW11 7US
United Kingdom

OUR CONCERN: EQUALITY ACT (USA) 2019

Dear Ambassador Johnson,

We are writing to you on behalf of the International Federation for Therapeutic and Counselling Choice regarding the serious threat that the Equality Act (USA) 2019 poses to clients' right to seek counselling or psychotherapy for unwanted same-sex attraction and gender confusion, and to the mental health professionals and religious pastoral counselors and clergy who would provide such support. We at the International Federation for Therapeutic and Counselling Choice have as our aim to provide such intervention to the highest standard, and to defend it whenever and wherever it comes under threat. In particular we object to Section 2(a)(7) of the Equality Act which would enshrine in statute law the misleading and deceitful term 'conversion therapy'. This term was first used and propagated by gay activist psychologist Douglas C. Haldeman in a way which arbitrarily conflates standard forms of psychotherapy for clients with unwanted same-sex attraction with treatment of a sample of male clients including a number of homosexual sex offenders in the United Kingdom conducted by psychiatrists. The aim of such conflation was clearly to discredit any and every practice in the mental health profession aimed at diminishing same-sex attraction and behaviour, and this by associating standard talking therapy as well as religiously-based pastoral care with controversial aversion techniques. We expose the problem in the Appendix on the term 'conversion therapy' added at the end of this letter.

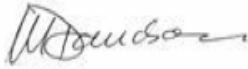
We also note that in proposing to ban so-called 'conversion therapy' across the USA, the Equality Act would effectively ban all therapy or counselling, be it secular or religious, aimed at helping clients suffering from transgender confusion to live in harmony with their biological sex. This would include treatment of clients who have not yet undergone physiological gender reassignment, as well as of clients who desire to reverse that process due to dissatisfaction and regret. Most disturbing is the fact that age is not mentioned in the Act, meaning that the proposed therapy ban would affect treatment of minors as well. This would effectively shut down vital mental health and pastoral care of children and young people, especially those who have been sexually abused.

It is clear to us that should the Equality Act become law its influence would be felt internationally, well beyond the United States. This is due to the fact that the USA would be held up as a model for the new progressive interpretation of human rights and human dignity across the western world. In particular we note that the Atlantic Council wishes to make so-called 'conversion therapy' bans part of a LGBTI-friendly US foreign policy aimed at influencing all NATO member states.

As such the signing into law of the Equality Act would constitute a very grave and unprecedented attack by the government of the USA on fundamental freedoms enshrined in and upheld by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These include freedom of religion, freedom of speech, the right to respect for private and family life, the right to determine one's sexual orientation, the client's right to choose therapy according to his or her own criteria, and the right to marry.

We urge you as Ambassador of the United States of America to the United Kingdom to make the case to the US government for the President not to sign the Equality Act (USA) 2019 into law. Fundamental rights and freedoms and human dignity itself are at stake not only in the USA but around the world.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Michael Davidson
IFTCC Chairman

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Appendix on the term 'conversion therapy'

Douglas C. Haldeman first used the term 'conversion therapy' in 1991 in the publication cited below. In the first page of this book chapter he failed to distinguish between psychotherapy and counselling on the one hand, and psychiatry on the other. This led to putting the published findings of psychoanalytic psychotherapeutic work by Irving Bieber with voluntary clients in the USA in the mid-twentieth century (pp. 150-151) alongside the published work of Desmond Curran and Denis Parr published in 1957 on a British sample of 100 male clients, 30 of whom were referred due to being convicted of homosexual sex offences, 22 due to having psychiatric problems and 12 due to pressure from friends or relatives. It is evident from reading Curran and Parr's paper that many of the clients under consideration had little intrinsic motivation to pursue change in sexual attraction. As such it should be of little surprise that most did not experience any significant degree of change. Also relevant - and ignored by Douglas Haldeman - is the fact that as many as 17 of the 100 clients were paedophiles, i.e. attracted to pre-pubescent boys, and out of these 12 were not attracted to adult males. It is implausible to suppose that such paedophiles would be motivated to develop an interest in adult females.

Douglas C. Haldeman, (1991). Sexual orientation conversion therapy for gay men and lesbians: A scientific examination. In J. C. Gonsiorek & J. D. Weinrich (Eds.), *Homosexuality: Research implications for public policy* (pp. 149-160). Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc. <http://drdoughaldeman.com/doc/ScientificExamination.pdf>

Douglas C. Haldeman, *The Practice and Ethics of Sexual Orientation Conversion a Therapy*, *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, v62 n2 p221-27 Apr 1994 <http://www.drdoughaldeman.com/doc/Practice&Ethics.pdf>

Irving C. Bieber, *Homosexuality: A Psychoanalytic Study of Adult Male Homosexuals*. New York: Basic Books, 1962.

Desmond Curran and Dennis Parr, 'Homosexuality: An Analysis of 100 Male Cases Seen in Private Practice', *British Medical Journal*, April 6, 1957, 797-801. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1973178/pdf>