



PE1573/A

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The Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament

29 September 2015

PE01573 – Statutory teaching of LGBTI+ issues

Dear Sir/Madam,

On behalf of the Free Church of Scotland I write concerning PE01573: statutory teaching of LGBTI+ issues.

At the outset we restate our view that no pupils should be bullied in school for their beliefs and for the pursuit of a particular lifestyle and morality. We do not believe that insisting that all pupils should be subject to a particular sexual ethic, irrespective of the beliefs and desires of their parents is either the only way or the best and most obvious way of tackling this problem.

We are opposed to the petition for a number of reasons:

1. The UK's Human Rights Act (1998) states: "In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, **the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.**"

The petitioner's demand for statutory teaching of such topics without provision for parents and pupils who disagree is in direct conflict with the UKHR Act. If granted the results would inevitably and evidently involve the promotion of a lifestyle which we view as contrary to God's good plan for us.

2. We believe that the real object of the petition is to indoctrinate school pupils with one particular perspective on moral and sexual ethics and one which is contrary to mainstream Christianity. We believe this is a Trojan horse to impose an ideological perspective on all pupils, whether they want it or not.

3. The petitioner sees promoting equal opportunities with statutory lessons which promote LGBT values, lifestyle choices, history and sexual health education as a means of tackling bullying. Bullying occurs in schools for a multitude of reasons and

should be tackled with a mixture of pastoral support and disciplinary measures and not by the State prescribing particular moralities every time some group or other is identified as being bullied for their beliefs and lifestyles.

4. Of course the statistics provided (that 71 per cent of LGBT pupils skip school, 54 per cent self-harm, 49 per cent feel they are underachieving and 26 per cent have attempted suicide) are deeply concerning, but it is not clear that sexual orientation is the main reason behind them. Without a comparison to young people in general – and heterosexual young people in particular it is difficult to determine the force of the statistics but even if they are evidently as bad as they seem it does not follow that the only way to tackle them is to prescribe a morality with which many parents would disagree.

Naturally 'equal opportunity to achieve' is something the Free Church of Scotland supports, but we disagree that the only way to achieve this is to make this teaching mandatory. It also begs the question; what about the rights of those students who would feel excluded by this teaching?

The petitioner's demand for statutory teaching of such topics without provision for parents and pupils who disagree, since they would evidently involve the promotion of a lifestyle which we view as contrary to God's good plan for us, breaches the human rights of Bible-believing Christians in Scotland.

Because of this, we urge the committee to close the petition.

Yours Sincerely,

Rev David Robertson
Moderator
The Free Church of Scotland.