[Date]

[Name of Senator]

Washington D.C.

**RE: Urging a No Vote on H.R. 5 Equality Act**

Dear Sen. [name]:

 We are members of [organization], a network of [pastors and leaders of faith-based organizations] throughout [state]. We represent more than [number] of your constituents who are deeply disturbed by many of the provisions of H.R. 5 and the violations of inalienable rights that will occur if it is permitted to become law. On behalf of our members, your constituents, we urge you to oppose H.R. 5.

 Most disturbing to us as faith-based leaders and constituents is the provision which would explicitly remove the protections of the Religious Freedom Restoration as a defense to a claim covered by HR 5 or as a basis for challenging its enforcement. This is a blatant attack on our inalienable right to free exercise of religion that has been enshrined in the First Amendment since the founding of our country. We cannot conceive of any legitimate reason why a bill aimed at combating discrimination and fostering equal treatment for all would promote discrimination against people of faith.

 We are also alarmed about H.R. 5’s proposed redefinition of “sex” to include “sexual orientation and gender identity.” “Sex” is the objective, biological reality that human beings are created male and female. H.R. 5 proposes to create a new social construct of “sex” that will be based on subjective feelings and notions of identity and attraction that cannot be objectively defined. Even more alarmingly, H.R. 5 would include not only observed “sex,” “sexual orientation and gender identity,” but also merely a perception or belief, even inaccurate perceptions or beliefs, about a person’s sex, “sexual orientation and gender identity.” Including perceptions and beliefs in a redefined notion of “sex” cannot serve any legitimate purpose other than attempting to control individuals’ thoughts and beliefs.

Perceptions and beliefs cannot be objectively measured and so necessarily would be based on another’s perceptions and beliefs. This is an assault on freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and free exercise of religion, the very foundations of our society. We are already witnessing censorship of unpopular speech and beliefs in schools, workplaces, and social media. H.R. 5 will mean that the censorship will increase. This will create inequality, not equality.

Replacing biological reality with subjective social constructs would make the concept of “men” and “women” meaningless. Anyone could self-identity as a “woman” and access women’s privacy facilities, sports teams, and other benefits, which would destroy, not improve the equality that girls and women have obtained since the Civil Rights Act was passed. Women and girls would also lose the safety and privacy of sex-separated private spaces. They would be forced to abandon notions of modesty in the presence of the opposite sex and safety from harm at the hands of predatory members of the opposite sex. Again, we cannot conceive how erasing the concept of “man” and “woman” and abandoning biological reality leads to greater equality and protection from harassment and discrimination.

The notion of “equality” under H.R. 5 also threatens the privacy and safety of women and girls. We are quite concerned that HR 5 would explicitly require that schools, workplaces, and houses of worship viewed as “public accommodations” would have to permit males who subjectively identify as females to use shared privacy facilities (restrooms, locker rooms and dressing rooms) set aside for females, and vice versa. Women and children who use these facilities would be placed at increased risk for harassment or assault by predatory men who claim to identify as women in order victimize them. In addition, women and girls would lose the educational and athletic opportunities they have obtained under Title IX because their sex-separate athletic teams would now have to include males who identify as females but retain the physiological advantages of being biologically male. Again, this does not promote equality.

HR 5 would undermine parents’ rights to direct the upbringing and education of their children. Parental values of modesty and privacy would be contradicted by school officials who would require that children accept the presence of an opposite sex classmate in their restroom, locker room, shower or athletic team. Children would be required to accept that their female classmates are actually male or male classmates are actually female, contradicting their parents’ instruction concerning the binary nature of sex. Parents and children who want to adhere to the biological reality about males and females and/or Biblical teachings about the binary nature of sex will be discriminated against and subject to unequal treatment.

H.R. 5 would also violate the free exercise and conscience rights of health care workers whose sincerely held beliefs prevent them from performing abortions or surgeries on healthy people for purposes of mimicking the opposite sex. These health care professionals will be forced to choose between their beliefs and their call to healing people.

 H.R. 5 threatens the fundamental constitutional rights, privacy, safety and well-being of all constituents in [ state]. It will reverse decades of progress in protecting women and girls and providing them with equal protection under the law. We view it as an assault on the unalienable rights and foundational values on which our country was founded. It subverts rather than furthering the purpose of equality and non-discrimination.

We strongly urge you to vote No on H.R. 5.

 [Signatures]