



The First Presbyterian Church

of Howard County

9325 Presbyterian Circle
Columbia, Maryland 21045

410-730-3545 voice
410-715-4981 fax

www.firstpreshc.org

O. Morton Harris
D.Min.
Co-Pastor

Sue Lowcock Harris
D.Min.
Co-Pastor

Virginia Callegary
M.A.C.E.
Director of
Christian Education

Matt May
M.M.
Director of
Music Ministries

Statement of First Presbyterian Church of Howard County, Maryland on the Florida “Don’t Say Gay” Legislation

Unanimously approved by the Session of First Presbyterian Church of Howard County, Maryland on April 26, 2022.

On March 28, 2022 Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed CS/CS/HB 1557: Parental Rights in Education, otherwise known as the “Don’t Say Gay” law.

This law is an attack on the LGBTQ+ community, our education system, and our children. It utilizes fear and the threat of reprisal to stifle knowledge and healthy discussion, and eliminates any and all student confidentiality. Nowhere in this bill does it address the mental and physical welfare of the children it portends to protect.

Reported to be encouraged by Christian-faith-based organizations, it does not reflect our church’s Christian values of love and respect for all.

The law is broad and vague, and on the surface does not sound unreasonable. Parents should have rights in how their children are being educated. However, make no mistake, this law is targeted at the LGBTQ+ community in order to stifle any discussion of human sexuality not deemed appropriate.

The most publicized paragraph of the law below uses a standard fear tactic stating something perfectly reasonable to suggest something undesirable is happening.

“3. Classroom instruction by school personnel or third parties on sexual orientation or gender identity may not occur in kindergarten through grade 3 or in a manner that is not age appropriate or developmentally appropriate for students in accordance with state standards.”

The law establishes parents’ right to have access to all of their students’ health, mental and physical information, and requires the school to notify and seek permission for students to receive health services at the beginning of each school year. The impact on middle and high school students could be the denial of the services they require the most due to lack of privacy or fear of job loss on the part of the counselor.

The law also requires the school system to address parents’ concerns within 7 days. If not addressed to the parent’s satisfaction, a special magistrate process is to be established to investigate, evaluate the information and make a recommendation to the board of education. Imagine the chilling effect this will

have on teachers. If teachers say something any student's parents may find objectionable, they could lose their jobs.

This law is a wolf in sheep's clothing, it does not represent Christian values, and it is not in the best interest of our children or their teachers. This is a blatant attempt to chip away at the progress made to ensure the welfare and emotional health of youth during what may be a chaotic and confusing time in their lives.

Currently 15 other states are considering similar legislation.

First Presbyterian Church of Howard County denounces these types of bills for the reasons mentioned above. We stand in support of the LGBTQ+ community and in support of teachers and counselors.