Victor Madrigal-Borloz, Independent Expert

c/o Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Geneva, Switzerland

Re: Call for Inputs, Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity with focus on practices of so-called “conversion therapy”

December 20, 2019

Dear Mr. Madrigal-Borloz:

I write on behalf of Family Research Council (FRC), a non-governmental organization based in the United States of America which engages in public policy research and advocacy related to issues of marriage, family, human sexuality, the respect for human life, and religious liberty.

Family Research Council has done extensive research on the issue of sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE), which critics of the practice refer to as “conversion therapy.” It is my pleasure to transmit to you the major publications which FRC has issued on this topic, to help inform your consideration of it. These include the following papers:

*Protect Client and Therapist Freedom of Choice Regarding Sexual Orientation Change Efforts* (March 2014); also online at: <https://www.frc.org/socetherapyban>.

This publication provides an overview of the issue and makes the case *against* placing any legal restrictions on SOCE. Additional states have placed restrictions upon SOCE in the U.S. since this was published, but it still provides a good general overview of the issue.

*The Hidden Truth About Changing Sexual Orientation: Ten Ways Pro-LGBT Sources Undermine the Case for Therapy Bans* (May 2018); online at: <https://www.frc.org/therapybans>.

Although some professional organizations such as the American Psychological Association (APA) have issued policy statements that are critical of SOCE, the often-cited APA Task Force report of 2009 on the subject actually made several concessions that undermine the case for placing any legal restrictions upon SOCE.

*Are Sexual Orientation Change Efforts (SOCE) Effective? Are They Harmful? What the Evidence Shows* (September 2018); online at: <https://www.frc.org/issueanalysis/are-sexual-orientation-change-efforts-soce-effective-are-they-harmful-what-the-evidence-shows>

Critics of SOCE often claim there is no evidence that it is effective, but this is simply untrue. This paper reviews six studies or surveys published between 2000 and 2018, several in peer-reviewed academic journals, which all show SOCE can be effective for some clients, and with a minimum of harm.

*Evidence Shows Sexual Orientation Can Change: Debunking the Myth of “Immutability”* (March 2019); online at: <https://www.frc.org/sexualorientation>.

Critiques of SOCE are based, at least in part, on claims or presumptions that “sexual orientation” is an immutable characteristic. This paper reports results from four large data sets reflecting longitudinal analysis of the same individuals over time in population-based samples. Although not an examination of intentional sexual orientation change efforts, these data clearly indicate that sexual orientation can change substantially over time in some individuals, thus undermining the criticisms of SOCE.

Claims that SOCE is ineffective and harmful are not supported by the best evidence. Furthermore, legal restrictions upon the practice of SOCE represent a significant threat to the religious liberty of both clients and therapists, since the majority of clients and therapists involved in these efforts (though not all) are motivated at least in part by their religious faith, and the desire of clients to receive help in living their lives in accordance with the moral teachings of their faith.

I urge you not to be misled by the distortions and misrepresentations of the evidence in the propaganda and rhetoric wielded by opponents of SOCE. No state, international body, or other organization should deny freedom of choice to those who voluntarily seek assistance in altering their sexual attractions, behavior, and/or identification.

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