

July 6, 2016

The Honorable Jason Chaffetz
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Cancel July 12 Hearing on Discriminatory Anti-LGBT Bill

Dear Chairman Chaffetz:

Like millions around the world, we were heartbroken by the murder of 49 people and the wounding of 53 others at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida on June 12. The overwhelming majority of the victims of this attack were Latino/Latina/Latinx and LGBT. As President Obama movingly reminded the nation just hours after this horrendous attack:

The shooter targeted a nightclub where people came together to be with friends, to dance and sing-to live. The place where they were attacked is more than a nightclub -- it's a place of solidarity and empowerment where people have long come together to raise awareness, speak their mind and advocate for their civil rights. So this is a sobering reminder that attacks on any American -- regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation -- is an attack on all of us and on the fundamental values of equality and dignity that define us as a country.¹

July 12 will mark the one-month anniversary of this tragedy. In the month since, Congress has not held a single hearing on the needs of the victims, their families, and survivors, or on ways to better protect the LGBT community from bias-motivated violence or discrimination. We are deeply disappointed to learn that the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform plans to hold a hearing on a discriminatory, anti-LGBT bill known as the "First Amendment Defense Act" (H.R. 2802) on the one-month anniversary of this tragedy. **We write to urge you to cancel this hearing.**

Rather than focusing on legislation to protect LGBT people and others in America from harm, FADA would permit unprecedented taxpayer-funded discrimination against LGBT people. Among the legislation's many harms, it could even allow any privately owned business to refuse to let a gay or lesbian employee take time off to care for their sick spouse, in violation of family and medical leave laws – a particularly appalling aspect given the many families currently caring for those who were injured in the Orlando shooting. A proposal like this only serves to harm a vulnerable community.

¹ Pres. Barack Obama, Remarks on Mass Shooting in Orlando (Jun. 12, 2016), *available at* <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/06/12/remarks-president-mass-shooting-orlando>

We have seen similar discriminatory bills introduced in state legislatures across the country this year – the vast majority of which were defeated after facing significant, bipartisan backlash. One such proposal that was signed into law in Mississippi was blocked by a federal judge on June 30 as a violation of both the Establishment Clause and the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution.²

We urge you to cancel the July 12 hearing and instead hold hearings on how best to ensure that no one in this country is subjected to violence or discrimination based on who they are or whom they love.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

Advocates for Youth
American Civil Liberties Union
American Humanist Association
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Anti-Defamation League
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals (ARHP)
Athlete Ally
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
BiNet USA
Catholics for Choice
Center for Inquiry
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
Equality Federation
Family Equality Council
Feminist Majority Foundation
Freedom for All Americans
GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD)
GLSEN
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
Human Rights Campaign
Institute for Science and Human Values
Jewish Women International (JWI)
Keshet
Lambda Legal
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Marriage Equality USA
NAACP
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Abortion Federation
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum

² Chris Geidner, *Federal Judge Halts Mississippi Anti-LGBT Law From Going Into Effect*, BUZZFEEDNEWS, Jul. 1, 2016, https://www.buzzfeed.com/chrisgeidner/federal-judge-halts-mississippi-anti-lgbt-law-from-going-int?utm_term=.krXv20Gbm#.fyVk3NJ7Y.

National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Council of Jewish Women
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
PFLAG National
People For the American Way
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Population Connection Action Fund
Pride at Work
Religious Institute
Secular Coalition for America
Secular Policy Institute
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation

State/Local Organizations

AIDS Alabama
Equality Alabama
Equality California
Equality Florida
Equality Illinois
EqualityMaine
Equality Michigan
Equality New Mexico
Equality North Carolina
Equality Ohio
Equality South Dakota
Equality Texas
Fair Wisconsin
Fairness Campaign
Georgia Equality
One Colorado
OutFront Minnesota
PROMO
The Los Angeles LGBT Center
Whitman-Walker Health

Cc: The Honorable Elijah Cummings, Ranking Member, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform