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CATHOLICS FOR THE COMMON GOOD

A NEW CATHOLIC ACTION

June 16, 2011

RE: SB 48 (Leno) Instruction: prohibition of discriminatory content

The Honorable Julia Brownley, Chair
Assembly Education Committee
State Capitol, Room 2163
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assembly Member Brownley,

Catholics for the Common Good opposes SB 48. While it is laudable to fight discrimination, SB 48 is unnecessary and will be counterproductive.

Problems regarding LGBT bullying are not going to be solved by cosmetically sexualizing social studies in California K-12 schools by drawing attention to a person's sexual orientation or life-style. Inserting "heterosexual" along with "gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgender" in the bill will help demonstrate how inappropriate assignments of sexuality are in the course of teaching the contributions of people in history.

Sexuality is common to every human person. Sexuality and related lifestyles are only a small part of a person, and children must be taught that they do not have any bearing on the intrinsic dignity of the person. Requiring a focus on the sexuality of the person in text books and curricula could actually have the opposite effect than that intended as it reduces the person to an identity when in reality he or she is so much more.

It is the intrinsic value of the person that is the foundation of human rights and is the requirement for respect regardless of ability, physical characteristics, age, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or cultural background, etc.

That fact that LGBT persons have faced and continue to face unjust discrimination is an important fact that must be taught and not forgotten, but this bill will not affect that.

Prohibition of discrimination in curriculum content and school activities is already protected in both the educational and criminal codes. This bill does nothing to augment that. However, the language of SB 48 is so vague, and subject to such broad interpretation, that it can only lead to confusion, conflict, and the potential for complaints and litigation at the state and school district levels. We do not need more conflict in schools but more focus on the respect and the dignity of all persons, and on the primary job of education, which is to contribute to the development and flourishing of each and every child that they might reach their full potential as productive members of society.

We urge the members of the committee to vote no on this bill.

Sincerely

William B. May

cc: Members of the Assembly Education Committee
        The Honorable Mark Leno, Author