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United Church of Christ leaders condemn contemplated attack on transgender and intersex rights

CLEVELAND (October 24, 2018) – Long before national policies acknowledged the spectrum of gender expression, the United Church of Christ embraced the Imago Dei in every human being. Since the ordination of Bill Johnson in 1972, gay, lesbian, bisexual, intersex and transgender clergy have served as ministry leaders and pastors of UCC congregations in every setting of the church because we believe the words of Peter in Acts 10: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to God.”

National news outlets report the current Administration is circulating a memo asking the Department of Health to establish a legal definition of sex under Title IX, a federal civil rights law banning gender discrimination.

The memo asks the Department to define gender as either male or female, established by genitalia at birth, and unalterable throughout a person’s life.

Whether or not this assault on the dignity of all transgender and intersex people is accomplished, they, their families and loved ones have already been traumatized.

This kind of blatant discrimination is exactly what Title IX was written to prevent. Previous administrations have enacted critical civil rights laws to protect the transgender community from abuse, discrimination, and violence.

The United Church of Christ supported those protections. They are consistent with a theology that expresses a core belief that God is love, offered freely and unconditionally to all. UCC leaders must always leverage the full capacity of their voice to engage powers and principalities that seek to limit the full expression of God’s love for all.

To be clear, the United Church of Christ stands in full support of the transgender and intersex community. We deplore the abuse of government power and authority that assembles to deprive transgender and intersex Americans from their God-given and constitutionally mandated inalienable

rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

We call upon leaders across the Church to speak out against this proposed action, to proactively engage the practice of love for all, and inform all relevant elected officials that these threatened actions are inconsistent with our faith and our country's highest ideals.

Peter's theology of a God who shows no partiality was based on the experiences he had with Jesus - whose love was not filtered through outdated cleanliness laws that left some worthy of God's love and others unworthy. The Christianity Peter envisioned would burst through those barriers and become a faith all-embracing of God's beautiful assembly of human life.

UCC will continue its historical and ongoing mission to rebuild the church and the world in the image and likeness of a God who shows no partiality.

In that pursuit, we declare our strong opposition to any attempt by the current Administration to deprive transgender and intersex Americans of their civil rights.

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About the United Church of Christ The United Church of Christ is a mainline Protestant denomination comprised of nearly 900,000 members and 5,000 congregations nationwide. Headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, the UCC is a church of many firsts, including the first mainline denomination to ordain a woman, the first to ordain an openly-gay man and the first predominantly white denomination to ordain an African American. The UCC and its members are tireless advocates for social issues such as immigration reform, racial equality, LGBT rights, marriage equality, environmental protection and economic justice.