

Protections under attack – contact Alex Salmond today

Dear marriage supporter,

As you may be aware, the Scottish Government recently sought views on draft guidance on how sex education should be taught in schools, triggered by the recent introduction of same-sex marriage legislation.

Despite the Government having promised to protect the rights of conscience of traditional marriage supporters, the alleged safeguards in the draft guidance fell a long way short of giving adequate reassurance – but they were at least something.

Now it has emerged that even these modest protections have come under attack from several Scottish Health Boards and the Scottish Human Rights Commission, who have written to the Government saying the guidance should be watered down even further. It's an outrage that public bodies are using their influence to seek to deny parents and teachers their right to freedom of conscience.

The draft guidance states:

“In issuing this guidance it is the Scottish Government’s expectation that if a teacher, child or young person is asked to do something against his or her conscience, he or she should be able to raise this with the school or local authority. The Scottish Government would expect alternative arrangements to be made where possible.”

This is far from a robust opt-out, but it's still too much for some.

Both the NHS Highland/Highland Council and the NHS Dumfries & Galloway/Dumfries & Galloway Council submissions are critical of an “opt-out” for teachers commenting that: “There would...be a range of difficulties in specific parts of Scotland where the majority of teachers in a given school may have homophobic views” – a shocking slur on Scotland’s teachers. NHS Lothian were also very critical of an “opt-out” for teachers – in effect implying that the right of conscience should be eroded even further.

In complete contrast, recent [guidance issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) on the Westminster Government’s Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act makes it explicitly clear that: “No school, or individual teacher, is under a duty to support, promote or endorse marriage of same sex couples” and makes many other very positive statements about the rights of parents and teachers (the Coalition for Marriage has helpfully highlighted these statements in the document).

Based on the responses to the draft guidance, the Scottish Government is expected to re-draft the guidance. Please [contact First Minister Alex Salmond \(FirstMinister@scotland.gsi.gov.uk\)](mailto:FirstMinister@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) today, urging him to honour the commitments he gave to uphold the freedom of conscience for people who believe in traditional marriage, and to resist pressure to further dilute the draft guidance.

If you are a parent with children in school, please say so.

- Say that you should have the right to withdraw your child(ren) from lessons that are

incompatible with your beliefs about marriage.

- Say that it is not the role of health boards or the Scottish Human Rights Commission to undermine your parental authority.
- Ask for an assurance from the First Minister that your views will be respected and that the ultimate right to have your children excused from sex education will be retained.

If you are a teacher:

- Say that employment equality and human rights laws uphold freedom of belief in the workplace.
- Say that you should not be forced to act against your conscience in the area of marriage.
- Say that the belief that marriage is between a man and a woman has been recognised as a belief worthy of respect in a democratic society.

Contact Alex Salmond today

(FirstMinister@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

Thank you once again for your support,

The Scotland for Marriage team

Scotland for Marriage

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