

January 9, 2007

Public Comment to Montgomery County Board of Education (as delivered)

By Peter Sprigg

Re: Health Education Curriculum

Good morning. My name is Peter Sprigg, and I have represented PFOX (Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays) on the Citizens Advisory Committee on Family Life and Human Development.

I speak today to urge that you reject the recommended Condom Use Demonstration Lesson, as well as the Grade 8 and Grade 10 lessons on “Respect for Differences in Human Sexuality.”

I will focus on two flaws which involve a lack of the very thing which the title of the lessons says they are intended to promote—namely a *true* “respect for *differences* in human sexuality.”

I would remind the Board that the original reason for adding lessons to the curriculum dealing with sexual orientation was to fulfill a somewhat ambiguous state mandate that schools teach about “sexual variation.” Ironically, the lessons that have been presented to you fail completely to acknowledge that many individuals experience considerable “variation” in various aspects of “sexual orientation” over the course of their lives. In particular, it does not even acknowledge the existence of those who identify themselves as former homosexuals, or “ex-gays.” This can only be considered discrimination, pure and simple.

The new curriculum is also guilty of viewpoint discrimination—one of the key flaws in the old curriculum. In particular, I object to the curriculum’s use of the unscientific and highly ideological term “homophobia.” A majority of the Citizens Advisory Committee agreed that the curriculum should show respect for varying opinions on this controversial issue by noting, “Civil expressions of disapproval of homosexual behavior out of sincere religious, moral, or health-related concerns should not be labeled as homophobia.” The dictionary definition which the staff chose to include instead is wholly inadequate to protect freedom of thought and freedom of speech, and therefore shows no respect for the differences in public opinion over this issue.