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# 'Take Pride Act' forces nonprofits to 'abandon their values,' attorney says

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By

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Renee Carlson, general counsel for True North Legal, testifies before a Minnesota Senate Committee. (Minnesota Senate Media/YouTube)

The Minnesota DFL's controversial "Take Pride Act" seeks to abolish existing state law allowing nonprofits that serve minors to uphold sex distinctions in hiring practices, such as scouting and youth sports organizations.

Renee Carlson, general counsel of True North Legal, called the legislation a “significant encroachment on the fundamental liberties of Minnesotans who choose to live consistent with their personal moral values and religious beliefs.”

“Under the guise of human rights, this legislation would shrink the scope of current exemptions under the law, effectively banning disagreement over the government’s perception of sexual orthodoxy, finding those who reasonably object to government ideology in violation of the law,” she told Alpha News.

Carlson, who submitted a two-page letter to legislators outlining her concerns with the bill, said the Take Pride Act “is not about equality.”

“To the contrary, this bill strikes at the delicate balance and preservation afforded to individuals in a free-thinking society, chipping away the most basic fundamental rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and the Minnesota State Constitution,” she explained. “Rather than protect fundamental liberties, this bill creates a slippery slope to continue repealing the law’s existing protections for people of conscience — especially individuals who believe in sex-based biological distinctions between males and females.”

The Take Pride Act caused controversy in the legislature last month when Alpha News reported on its attempt to remove language from Minnesota’s Human Rights Act which states that pedophilia is not a protected “sexual orientation.”

A GOP amendment was unanimously passed in the House to clarify that pedophiles are not a protected class after the bill faced national criticism.

However, some believe other provisions in the bill are even worse and would undermine exemptions to the Human Rights Act’s non-discrimination laws.

For example, the bill would remove this language from the Human Rights Act:

“The provisions of section 363A.08 shall not apply to a nonpublic service organization whose primary function is providing occasional services to minors, such as youth sports organizations, scouting organizations, boys’ or girls’ clubs, programs providing friends, counselors, or role models for minors, youth theater, dance, music or artistic organizations, agricultural organizations for minors, including 4-H clubs, and other youth organizations, with respect to qualifications of employees or volunteers based on sexual orientation.”

Gender identity is included in the current definition of “sexual orientation,” which is defined, in part, as “having a self-image or identity not traditionally associated with one’s biological maleness or femaleness.”

In effect, this means “a boys’ club that seeks to provide father figure type mentors to boys would be prohibited from allowing male-only mentors,” Carlson explained.

“Girls’ clubs and girls-only organizations from sports to theater would face the same prohibitions,” she said. “Many children benefit from various opportunities provided through the types of nonpublic service organizations this bill seeks to abolish, where mentorship based on sex distinctions is critical.”

The Take Pride Act doesn’t make any changes to the exemptions afforded to religious organizations.

The legislation was endorsed by Girl Scouts and the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits. Both specifically addressed the portion of the bill pertaining to the repealed statute.

“Girl Scouts River Valleys values diversity in all its forms and as such the employment exemption that exists under current law for youth focused organizations is contrary to our values of hiring an inclusive and diverse workforce. We support the provision in this bill removing this exemption from our state’s civil rights laws,” the group said in written testimony.

The legislation will make Minnesota a “more equitable” place, Girl Scouts said.

“As a nonprofit association that focuses and supports equity for all, we are in support of removing an employment exemption that would give youth-focused nonprofit organizations the ability to not hire someone

based on their sexual orientation or gender identity,” added the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits.

The Take Pride Act was incorporated into the omnibus civil law policy bill, which passed the House last month and is now being sorted out in a conference committee.

“The legislation is a categorical denial of rights to organizations that provide a benefit to children and communities throughout Minnesota,” Carlson concluded. “This legislation is senseless and deprives Minnesota children from opportunities to interact with mentors and role models that they can relate to at critical times in their development, while forcing nonprofit organizations to compromise their mission and abandon their values.”

The House DFL Caucus did not respond to a request for comment.

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Hayley Feland previously worked as a journalist with The Minnesota Sun, The Wisconsin Daily Star, and The College Fix. She is a Minnesota native with a passion for politics and journalism.