

Testimony before Montgomery County (MD) Board of Education
By Peter Sprigg
Resident, Montgomery County
Member, Board of Directors, Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays (PFOX)
Re: Policy CNA and Regulation CNA-RA ("backpack fliers")
February 27, 2012

Recently, controversy has again arisen regarding fliers from Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays (PFOX) that were distributed in several high schools. The flier states, "Every year thousands of people with unwanted same-sex attractions make the personal decision to leave a gay identity," and asserts that such people should be able to "seek help and information on overcoming their feelings."

The most defamatory accusation about the PFOX flier is that it is "anti-gay." The flier included statements such as, "All individuals deserve the right to self-determination and happiness based on their own needs, and not the needs of others." "All individuals" means *all* individuals—gay and ex-gay. The flier also declares, "PFOX supports tolerance." That means tolerance for *all*—gays and ex-gays. Yet apparently for some people, "tolerance" is a one-way street.

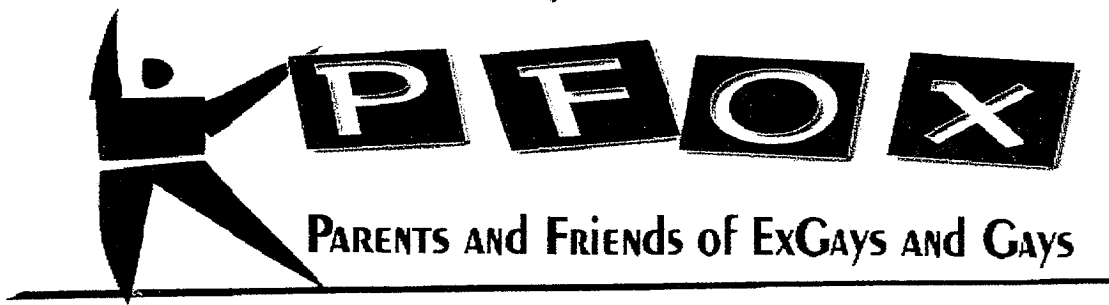
The flier does openly criticize some behavior—namely, "labeling" and "name-calling." Discrimination based on a person's *perceived* sexual orientation is one of the things forbidden in many "non-discrimination" codes. Surely opposition to name-calling and labeling should be a source of common ground, not of division.

PFOX has learned that some teachers refused to distribute the fliers, thus violating our rights as established by not one but two federal court decisions. I urge the Board to obey the law by instructing all MCPS faculty and staff that the fliers must be distributed, and by disciplining those who refuse.

Now, some are urging that you abolish the backpack flier program altogether—potentially punishing every non-profit organization in the county simply to censor one message of freedom and self-determination for all.

That, ladies and gentlemen, would be "reprehensible," "deplorable," and "disgusting."

Peter Sprigg is a resident of Montgomery County and serves on the Board of Directors of PFOX. He was a member of the MCPS Citizens Advisory Committee for Family Life and Human Development for six years (2005-2011).



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Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays & Gays (PFOX) promotes diversity for the ex-gay community. Ex-gays demonstrate that those with unwanted same-sex attractions can seek help and information on overcoming their feelings. All individuals deserve the right to self-determination and happiness based on their own needs, and not the needs of others. PFOX supports tolerance.

PFOX can provide: resources for parents and students, ex-gay speakers for your school or club, books for your school library, and brochures on same-sex attractions, bullying and tolerance.

Who are ex-gays?

Every year thousands of people with unwanted same-sex attractions make the personal decision to leave a gay identity through non-judgmental environments or their own initiative. Their decision is one only they can make. However, there are those in society who refuse to respect an individual's right to self-determination. Consequently, formerly gay men and women are discriminated against simply because they dare to exist. Ex-gays and their supporters are denied equal access and support, forcing them to remain silent for fear of negative reactions and disapproval.

But aren't some people born "gay"?

According to mainstream psychological associations, there are no replicated scientific studies to support that a person can be born "gay." No "gay gene" or gay center of the brain has been found. No medical test exists to determine if a person is homosexual. Sexual orientation is based on feelings and is a matter of self-affirmation and public declaration. Some teens are labeled "gay" or other names even though they do not have same-sex attractions. Appearance is not a reliable means to know what another person feels. No one should be labeled based on the perception of others. Name calling is wrong because the victim may begin to believe what others tell them about themselves, which may be completely false labeling and cause gender confusion.

If only one part of you has gay feelings, should your whole life be gay identified?

Many people would agree that just because one part of you feels a certain way, it doesn't mean your entire identity is that way. Having feelings of same-sex attraction may make you feel different. We all feel the need to fit in and be accepted. But no one should identify themselves based on sexual feelings alone. There is more to your identity than your sexual attractions. Thousands of ex-gay men and women had those very same feelings when they were in school. Get smart! Explore the origins of your same-sex attraction. Why do I have these feelings? Where did they come from? The decision of a prom date, a car, or whether to super-size those fries can be based on a feeling, but important decisions should not be made on feelings alone. In order to make an educated decision, you have to be informed! Sexuality develops over time. It isn't necessary to label yourself today.

Find out more at www.pfox.org !!!

(These materials are neither sponsored nor endorsed by the Board of Education of Montgomery County, the superintendent, or this school.)