

Hong Kong Blessed Minority Christian Fellowship
基恩之家

Dec 5. 2000

Members of LegCo Panel on Home Affairs
c/o Mr Stanley Ma
Clerk to Home Affair Panel
8 Jackson Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Madam/Sir,

**Response to Legco Home Affairs Panel's on
Discrimination on the Ground of Sexual Orientation**

Thank you for inviting us to respond to the above paper. We are very much appreciating that the Government's commitment to promoting equal opportunities for people with different sexual orientations. However, as a Christian organization welcoming people with diverse sexual preference and expression, we find that there are serious violation of human rights and discrimination in different Christian organizations, including churches, education and social service providers.

Since we were founded in 1992, we have been visited by more than 1200 people in whom over 95% have suffered discrimination and alienation from expression of their spirituality to a different extent. Most of them have repeatedly received messages invalidating homosexuality in their churches of different denominations. Some of them are even forced to receive aversive therapy, conversion counseling, suspension of religious rituals and even excommunication from regular Sunday services. The pressure of living in fear of exposure of their sexual orientation and constant reminder that one belongs to a group of rejected and sinful people is a major contributing factor to mental distress suffered by victims of human rights violence existing in such religious institution. As shown in a recent publication by the Society of Truth and Light, named *The Reality of Homosexuality*, people of marginalized sexual

orientation are still considered as having gender disorder resulting from sexual abuse in their childhood and are urged to convert. Such false portrayal of the different sexual minorities as disorder directly contradicts the long-established position of the American Psychiatric Association and the World Health Organization in regarding homosexuality and bisexuality as non-disease, mental or medical. Similar discriminatory and stereotyped messages are commonly and repeatedly perfused in the church community.

With regards to discrimination in the work place, we have received complaints from people with marginalized sexual orientation who were forced to resign from their teaching positions both in schools and churches. There are also cases that students of theology seminaries are being dismissed from their studies due to their sexual orientation. We are sure that there are many other kinds of discrimination inside and outside of the church community. However, there is no clear and protected mechanism within the Government to receive and handle such complaints with provision to guarantee that complainant's identity can be kept in strict confidentiality.

In this regard, we would like to make the following recommendations for the Bureau and Panel to consider and implement:

1. Legislate anti-discrimination laws for sexual orientation without giving religious and educational sectors exemption as we believe that religious rights cannot be privileged over others, since human rights are indivisible and that a person's sexual orientation and identity should not interfere in the full exercise of their human rights.
2. Prevention of discrimination of people with different sexual orientations within religious organizations be one of the key publicity and educational measures by the Bureau. We request that the Bureau monitor and report on specific actions and initiatives concerned.
3. Provide funding for NGO's organizing educational programs concerning alternative interpretation of different religions and sexual orientation, which emphasize inclusiveness, and affirmation of sexual orientation as basic human rights.

In light of the Government's response to the Hon Emily Lau Wai-hing's enquiry

in 1997 on the Bureau's position on fighting infringements to religious freedom of people with different sexual orientations. I trust the Bureau has a policy towards ensuring religious freedom and equal opportunities for all and would like to see the Bureau's measures to tackle the cases of discrimination mentioned above. We are looking forward to a thorough discussion in the Home Affairs Panel Meeting in the Dec 12, 2000.

Regards.

Ng Chin-pang
Hong Kong Blessed Minority Christian Fellowship.