



## Testimony of Mr. Jason Adkins, Executive Director

### School Safety Technical Assistance Council, July 19, 2017

Many today will raise prudent objections to the content of the SSTAC Transgender Toolkit. I hope to use my brief time to highlight its impact on the enterprise of education.

In short, the toolkit is another example of the ongoing evisceration of the purpose of education, which is to form students to pursue the truth, not merely to instruct or indoctrinate them.

In Plato's *Republic*, those whom Socrates calls the "lovers of the sight of the truth" detest falsehoods; they seek only that which is truth, having "no taste for falsehood; that is, they are completely unwilling to admit what's false but hate it, while cherishing the truth."<sup>1</sup>

Yet the denial of reality is precisely what this toolkit is encouraging schools to ask of faculty, students, and parents. "They must accommodate themselves to lies knowing that truthful words will be punished."<sup>2</sup>

Plato uses the allegory of the cave to describe those who have not been tutored to seek the deeper reality of things, and instead are held captive to puppeteers projecting shadows on the wall. Content to live in a world of appearances, untethered to the light of truth, they are merely pawns who can be instructed and manipulated, but not truly free to seek the true, the good, and the beautiful.

Today, our education system keeps students in chains, content to let them live well in the cave, so long as they don't bother anyone else's assertion of their subjective will.

The truth is that this toolkit fits neatly into a world of alternative facts, fake news, climate change denial, and trigger warnings. Science matters only when it serves an ideology. As a result, our public-school system and its leaders have contributed greatly to the decline in civil discourse and a denuded public culture, where the loudest, most powerful voices—not the truth—win; this toolkit is just its most recent and radical exaltation of a dictatorship of the subjective self.

When all that is left is the assertion of the subjective will untethered to what is objectively good or true, politics and education are merely instruments of power. Is it any surprise that this is where we find ourselves as a society today? Our students<sup>3</sup> who refuse to bend their knee to the new orthodoxies and deny some of the most basic facts of human existence will face the brunt of the penalties imposed by the so-called anti-bullying bill. Good thoughts will be rewarded; bad thoughts will be punished.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Gerard T. Mundy, "Hiding from the Sun: Gender Ideology's Attack on Truth," *The Public Discourse*, July 17, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> R.R. Reno, "While We're at It," *First Things*, Aug/Sept. 2017, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Over 80 percent of Catholic children attend public schools.

We said in 2013 that the anti-bullying legislation was less about protecting all students than ruthlessly imposing a plastic view of human beings on everyone, and punishing those who don't conform. The truth of that characterization is made all the clearer by this toolkit.

We all agree that our schools should be places that are welcoming and compassionate towards all people, regardless of personal struggles or the challenges that they bring to the classroom. Every person has inherent dignity and is entitled to respect and kindness.

But to enlist the schools, families, and students in a modern version of the tale of “The Emperor’s New Clothes” is to attack the very foundation of education as an enterprise rooted in the pursuit of truth. And, as others have noted, it is harmful to those children struggling with gender dysphoria. Not every subjective feeling should be affirmed by everyone else—especially when it is inconsistent with objective reality.

Thank you.