



May 29, 2018

Dear School Board Members,

I am a Visiting Assistant Professor of Medicine at the University of Virginia, a Virginia resident, and the Co-Director of the American Academy of Medical Ethics (AAME) in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

As you carefully and thoughtfully consider the Family Life Education Curriculum (FLEC) that is being proposed, I wanted to write as a physician and a person representing many health care professionals in AAME throughout Virginia, that we feel science should be your guide - not capricious cultural opinions.

Here are some basic facts that all physicians and health care professionals agree on:

1. Sex is an objective biological fact that is genetically determined at conception by the allocation of X and Y chromosomes to one's genome.
2. Human beings are sexually dimorphic. Male and female phenotypes are the outworking of sex gene expression, which shapes sex anatomy, determines sex hormone secretion, and influences every single cell in the body.
3. Sex is immutable through a person's lifetime and not a social construct arbitrarily assigned at birth or changed at all.
4. Scientific studies recognize that gender identity issues are complex and the inclination to identify with the opposite sex may have biological, familial and social origins that not necessarily chosen by a particular individual.

Because of these four basic facts, school boards should make decisions based on science and not be held captive to "movements" that contradict biological reality. It shows poor leadership in the field of education. Schools should be committed to teaching scientific facts not political ideology or popular opinion. For instance, statements like "biological sex is meaningless" are absurd to any reasonable scientist. The idea that sex is "assigned at birth" makes no sense to physicians, pediatricians and most reasonably educated people.

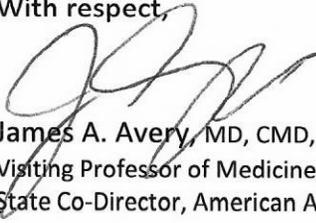
I, and my colleagues at AAME, strongly advise you to oppose the FLEC document or at least change its terminology:

1. **Use "biological sex" as the only way to determine someone's sex.** Avoid using the political, ideologic, and nonsensical phrase that "sex is assigned at birth." Let your vote be consistent with fundamental scientific principles. Be a role model to the parents in your community and to our students by showing your allegiance to basic scientific principles.
2. **Go slow on gender questions until medical science gives a more definitive position.** Resist the current unproven momentum of "gender-affirming" until more studies come

out. Current evidence is incomplete, but all studies suggest that gender questioning during childhood is common and malleable. In addition, many medical studies suggest that "gender affirmation," the prescribing of hormones and doing sex assignment surgery in children has a long list of potentially harmful physical, emotional and psychological side effects.

I am happy to provide references if desired for these points but I wanted the letter to be short and readable.

With respect,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Avery', written over the typed name.

James A. Avery, MD, CMD, FACP, FCCP, FAAHPM
Visiting Professor of Medicine, University of Virginia
State Co-Director, American Academy of Medical Ethics