Trump Admin. Just Quietly Revoked LGBT Health Protections

Even in the aftermath of riots in the Capitol building, a coup attempt, the loss of several Republican Congress members’ approval, and the resignation of many White House staffers, the Trump Administration continues to push for religious freedom policies.

According to the Washington Blade, the Trump Administration has removed anti-discrimination policies placed by the Obama Administration. Specifically, regulations within the Department of Health & Human Services that prohibited religious-charged discrimination have been revoked. Instead, they have been replaced with a new rule that supports religious freedom in government-funded programs. This now means that a taxpayer-funded program like adoption or fostering services can refuse LGBTQ people looking to house children in need. Or, LGBTQ youth in need of support could be turned away. Religious minority groups or women looking for abortions or other services are also at risk.

“Given the careful balancing of rights, obligations, and goals in the public-private partnerships in federal grant programs, the department believes it appropriate to impose only those nondiscrimination requirements required by the Constitution and federal statutes applicable to the department’s grantees,” the new federal rule says.

Many advocates and human rights organizations have come out to oppose this 11th-hour policy change from the Trump administration.

“In the coming weeks, Congress should swiftly reject this regressive rule,” said the Human Rights Watch in an official statement. “The Congressional Review Act allows Congress to disapprove of a recently enacted regulation and, with the president’s signature, prevent it from taking effect. With an upcoming presidential transition, the US government should take this opportunity to make clear again that the programs it funds are open to all qualified people, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.”

“The federal government should protect our country’s most vulnerable people instead of issuing rules that license discrimination,” said Rachel Laser, the CEO of Americans United for Separation of Church & State, to the Washington Post. “People should never be turned away from the services they need. That is especially true for children in foster care and the families who want to provide them with loving, safe homes. Rather than prioritizing the best interests of children and families, the Trump administration’s new rule invites taxpayer-funded foster care agencies to discriminate against them.”

“At the 11th hour, the lame duck Trump-Pence administration has published its parting assault on the LGBTQ community via a federal regulation that would permit discrimination across the entire spectrum of HHS programs receiving federal funding,” reported Human Rights Campaign President Alphonso David before urging, “The Biden-Harris administration and Secretary Designate Xavier Becerra must urgently work to rescind this discriminatory regulation.”

With less than two weeks left of the Trump Administration, it’s true that there isn’t much time before the next administration can change this new ruling. But, the timing of this change does not go without notice. Not only was it done in the midst of the administration’s collapse due to a failed coup attempt in the shape of a violent riot, which led to deaths and injuries, but it came with such little time left in Trump’s “reign.” Even with its light flickering out, the administration pulls a low blow against minority groups in America. And possibly, the act itself is a small but significant example of the administration’s legacy.

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