A Message from

Seven South Carolina University Presidents

Dear Governor Haley:

As South Carolinians, we are fortunate to have leaders in all areas of government who understand the value of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, specifically its provision for the free exercise of religion. You are among these leaders.

We write you today because we believe religious freedom at our institutions is at serious risk, and we respectfully ask for your help.

It is widely known that America's oldest institutions of higher education began as religious colleges, and that throughout the history of the United States, faith-based colleges and universities have been free to conduct their campuses in ways that are consistent with their religious convictions.

However, in recent weeks we have grown concerned about developing threats to the free exercise of religion in higher education at both the national and state level, and the potential impact those threats would have on our longstanding ability to set expectations of conduct that align with our institutions' longstanding religious tenets.

One such example, Senate Bill 1146 in the California Assembly, would greatly limit the ability of students, faculty, and staff on our campuses to freely exercise their religious beliefs. As originally introduced, SB 1146 would deny students' ability to participate in state grant programs—programs that exist to help low-income students, many of whom are racial minorities—at schools that are found in violation of the bill.

In Iowa, the Fort Des Moines Church of Christ has brought a lawsuit against the Iowa Civil Rights Commission for compelling the church to disseminate messages to which it objects on religious grounds.

At the national level, the Obama Administration has placed mandates on educational institutions that essentially force public school students to use bathrooms with members of the opposite biological sex, even though to do so violates the privacy and modesty of students who may object on the basis of their deeply held religious values.

Our nation has historically held to the idea that conscience and religious conviction come before the demands of the state. While we and our institutions do not agree on all religious matters, we all agree that the government has no place in discriminating against religious individuals or religious educational institutions by disqualifying them from grant and loan programs because of religious expression guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution.

As regionally accredited and state-chartered Christian universities, we support the educational diversity of South Carolina higher education institutions represented by public universities, private secular colleges and universities, and private religious colleges and universities. It is the specific mission of private religious universities to cultivate the mind and the soul in a way that cannot be done in public and secular universities. And as evidenced by our collective enrollment of over 13,000 last year, many South Carolina students want that

distinctive. To that end, we provide our students with academically challenging liberal arts and professional education, while exercising our freedom to advocate for Christian values and hold to them without heavy-handed government interference.

We are concerned that federal and state actions like the ones cited above could ultimately deny us the ability to fulfill our faith-based missions by taking away our freedom to hire and dismiss employees, provide healthcare for our employees, protect the privacy of our students in restrooms, showers, and residence halls, and deny our students the ability to use the federal and state financial aid to which they are entitled at faith-based universities.

We encourage you, as our Governor, to stand against any attempt by the federal government to infringe on religious freedom, and to oppose any attempt by the South Carolina General Assembly or state executive agencies to enact legislation, policies, administrative actions, or executive orders that infringe on the religious freedom of private religious universities. We also encourage you to use your platform as Governor to promote religious freedom.

We believe opposition to attempts to restrict religious freedom is important not just for religious freedom, and not for the pleading of one religion in particular, but for the protection of American democracy that requires a civil society welcoming of religious diversity.

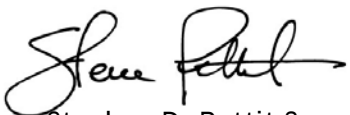
Thank you for your service to the people of South Carolina as our Governor, and for your service to education in the Palmetto state, both public and private.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



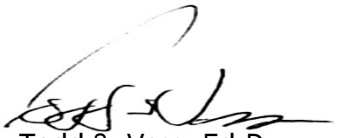
Jairy C. Hunter Jr., Ed.D.
Charleston Southern University



Stephen D. Pettit Sr.
Bob Jones University



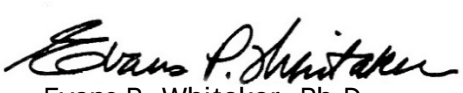
William H. Jones, D. Min.
Columbia International University



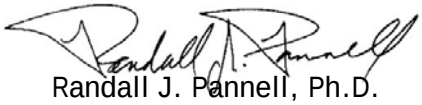
Todd S. Voss, Ed.D.
Southern Wesleyan University



Paul D. Kooistra, Ph.D.
Erskine College and Seminary



Evans P. Whitaker, Ph.D.
Anderson University



Randall J. Pannell, Ph.D.
North Greenville University