The Ohio Psychological Association seeks to meet the needs of gender and sexually diverse individuals and is opposed to any characterization of gender and sexually diverse individuals in a manner that suggests they are deviant or predatory. An accusation of “sexual grooming” by the mere fact of discussions about or expressions of gender and sexual diversity is just one example of how fear can be stoked by those opposed to gender and sexual diversity. Accusations such as this are untrue and are very dangerous because they inflame passions and promote violence.

Our education, research, clinical practices, and experiences lead us to conclude that gender and sexually diverse individuals want what all people want: safety and peace and the ability to form and maintain relationships of their own choosing without fear of harm or retaliation. Gender and sexually diverse individuals want security in jobs and housing: knowing that they will not be evicted or fired for expressing their identity and for loving whom they love.

Research in child development makes it clear that the freedom to discuss matters of identity and to explore the many possibilities in life allows a young person to fully discover themselves and to hold firm in their beliefs and their identities, whatever those might be. Not allowing exploration arrests the psychological development of children and teens and restricts their opportunities to find happiness in themselves and in their lives, which can have adverse consequences now or later in life.

It is true that some parents may be uncomfortable as their child or teen adopts a certain life path, whether that involves gender and sexual identity or a particular career or even whom one will marry. And parents may worry about any influence which they believe might lead their child to an understanding of themselves that they disagree with.

We ask political leaders, community leaders, business leaders, people of faith, ministers, priests, rabbis, imams, and other religious leaders to join us in denouncing hate directed at gender and sexually diverse people. If not full-throated support, we ask that others at least adopt a “live and let live” approach which respects and even celebrates our vibrantly diverse nation.

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The Ohio Psychological Association, in Columbus, Ohio, is membership organization of approximately 1,500 Ohio psychologists. Its mission is to advance psychology as a science, as a profession and as a means of promoting human welfare. For more information or for a psychologist referral, visit www.ohpsych.org.