



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

November 18, 2020

Roger L. Peace, Jr.
President
Word of Life Bible Institute
P.O. Box 600
Schroon Lake, NY 12870

Dear President Peace:

I write in response to your August 21, 2020, letter to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR), in which you requested assurance of a religious exemption for Word of Life Bible Institute (Institute) of Schroon Lake, New York and Hudson, Florida, from Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), 20 U.S.C. § 1681.

Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any education program or activity operated by a recipient of Federal financial assistance. Title IX and its implementing regulation at 34 C.F.R. § 106.12(a) provide that Title IX does not apply to an educational institution that is controlled by a religious organization to the extent that the application of Title IX would be inconsistent with the controlling organization's religious tenets. Therefore, such educational institutions may request an exemption from Title IX by identifying the provisions of Title IX that conflict with a specific tenet of the religious organization. *See* 34 C.F.R. § 106.12(b). The request must identify the religious organization that controls the educational institution and specify the tenets of that organization and the provisions of the law or regulation that conflict with those tenets. 34 C.F.R. § 106.12(c) sets forth the information that shall be sufficient to establish that an educational institution is controlled by a religious organization.

Your letter states that the Institute is a Christ-centered organization committed to teaching and upholding the Bible. According to your letter, the Institute "is governed by a board of trustees, each member of which is required to annually read and indicate consent to the Institution's statement of faith and religious tenets." Your letter also states that the Institute "requires its faculty, students, and employees to espouse and affirm their personal belief" in the religious tenets of the Institution "as those tenets are set forth in [the Institute's] statement of faith.

Your letter claims exemption from certain provisions of Title IX and its implementing regulations "to the extent that they are interpreted to conflict with the Institute's position on marriage, sexuality, and the sanctity of human life, which are set forth in [the Institute's] statement of faith." In support of this request your letter provided ten religious tenets that are set forth in the Institute's statement of faith. These include the following beliefs: "the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are verbally inspired of God, and they are without error in the original writings, and they are the supreme and final authority for faith and life;" "from the beginning with Adam and Eve, God ordained marriage as only between one man and one woman. All sexual activity outside of this biblical definition of marriage, including homosexual practices, is in direct contradiction to God's Word and His intention for the institution of the

home;” and “God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female for His Glory. These two distinct, complementary genders reflect the image and nature of God, and the rejection of one’s biological gender is a rejection of God’s decreed will and good plan for humanity and the individual.”

Your letter states that, for the above reasons, the Institute is requesting an exemption from the following regulatory provisions to the extent that they are interpreted to conflict with the Institute’s position on marriage, sexuality, and the sanctity of human life:

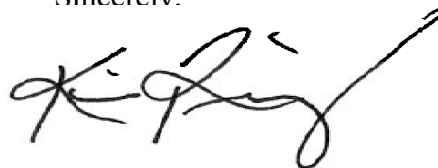
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.21 (governing admission);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.22 (governing preference in admission);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.23 (governing recruitment of students);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.31 (governing education programs or activities);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.32 (governing housing);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.33 (governing comparable facilities);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.34 (governing access to classes and schools);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.36 (governing counseling);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.37 (governing financial assistance);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.38 (governing employment assistance to students);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.39 (governing health and insurance benefits and services);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.40 (governing marital or parental status);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.41 (governing athletics);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.43 (governing standards for measuring skill or progress in physical education classes); and
- 34 C.F.R. §§ 106.51-61 (governing employment).

OCR recognizes that the Institute is exempt from these provisions to the extent that compliance would not be consistent with the religious tenets of the controlling organization. *See* 34 C.F.R. § 106.12(a).

Please note that this letter should not be construed to grant exemption from the requirements of Title IX and the regulation other than as stated above. In the event that OCR receives a complaint against your institution, we are obligated to determine initially whether the allegations fall within the exemption here recognized.

I hope this letter fully responds to your request. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kimberly M. Richey', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Kimberly M. Richey
Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights