

4908 Downey Ave.
Independence, MO 64055
July 8, 2017

America's Freedom Festival at Provo
Parade Committee
4626 North 300 West, Suite 300
Provo, UT 84604

Attention: America's Freedom Festival Parade Committee

I recently found out about your exclusion of Encircle: LGBT + Family & Youth Resource Center from participating in your annual parade, despite having preapproved their entrance. According to a Facebook post made by Encircle, you revoked their placement in the parade because you classified them as an "advocacy group." I am writing to you today to inform you that your decision was inappropriate, and removed an important local resource center from celebrating their success and their place within the community.

First, your classification of Encircle as an advocacy group is inappropriate. It is a 501c3 nonprofit organization. On their website, they state their goal is to be "a hub for resources that support the overall well-being of LGBTQ individuals" and "serve as a literal example of what a typical Utah home that is inclusive of its LGBTQ members might look and feel like." By classifying them as an advocacy group, you have indicated to the citizens of Utah, more specifically those in Utah County and the city of Provo, that you believe Encircle is promoting the LGBTQ lifestyle. That is a thwarted classification, and as I will continue to discuss in this letter, is an inappropriate and harmful position for Utahans and their families.

Second, Provo is the hub of Utah County, and your organization provides the largest summer celebration for residents of that county. Those residents look to you and the companies that you allow into your annual parade as the trustworthy companies in the county. You allow companies from banks to cellular providers, high schools to recreation centers. Many of those companies are involved in political enterprises, and are clearly not unbiased and advocacy-free groups. Yet, you cast the shade of disapproval on Encircle simply because their organization has "LGBTQ" in its name. As a true non-profit organization, it should have been admitted into the parade to provide the free advertising and potential for provide public awareness to the group that you allow other parade participants.

Third, by not allowing Encircle to participate in the parade, you implied to the residents of Utah that it was an inappropriate company for them to work with. As discussed above, the citizens of Utah County trust your parade admission process to introduce them to trustworthy companies. As your website declares, your parade "promotes traditional family values to around 300,000 spectators." As an organization that provides Utah families with the opportunity to receive the resources the Encircle provides. As one of the states with the highest teen and LGBTQ suicide rate, this kind of resource is clearly something that is needed in Utah. A main piece of traditional family values is loving and supporting your family – this facility provides the services that will help these religious families integrate their LGBTQ family member back into their family unit.

As I have outlined, your committee's last-minute decision to ban Encircle from marching in your parade was inappropriate and destructive to Encircle's reputation. You have maintained your silence since this occurred, which continues to add to the Utah residents' distrust of this company and its much-needed resources. I encourage you to come forward and make a statement, admitting that your actions were inappropriate and based on individual prejudices – not on the actual functions of Encircle.

If you would like to discuss this matter with me, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone at 398-294-7297 or by email at ezinkwri@iue.edu. I look forward to reading your formal statement on this matter.

Sincerely,

Emilie Zink-Wright

Emilie Zink-Wright
385-272-0946

Enclosure