



A protested appointment? Possible Madison County Mental Health Board appointee raises anti-LBGTQIA fears

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EDWARDSVILLE - One of the possible appointees to the Madison County Mental Health Board at Wednesday night's meeting of the Madison County Board has raised concerns among the local LBGTQIA community and its advocates.

Dr. Robert Weise, a professor emeritus at Concordia Seminary, is one of the appointees to the county's mental health board set to be voted in or out by the Madison County Board at the Wednesday night meeting. A concerned advocate of the LBGTQIA community sent Riverbender.com an article written by Weise in 2005 for the seminary titled *Christian Responses to the Culture's Normalization of Homosexuality*. In that article, Weise stated the "current culture of tolerance and relativism that homosexuality and gay marriage are the social, ethical, legal and religious issues of this century."

In the article, Weise said: *Normalization is the moral theory that homosexuality and heterosexuality are equally normal, equivalent and healthy for human beings. The Christian response is to pull this issue back into our churches for civil debate and discourse within the framework of our concern for all sinners and their eternal rest in the Lord.*

When asked about the article Wednesday afternoon, Weise said he did not believe many of the views have changed, but said the issue is no longer up for a cultural debate, because of a 2015 U.S. Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage.

"It is what it is," he said. "It is not a debatable issue anymore in terms of marriage."

Weise did say the issue of homosexuality and transgender individuals was still up for debate within the Christian world, with many people citing scriptures for their own person beliefs. He also said the issue is up for debate within the scientific community.

"As a scientist, you have to back up what you say with data," he said. "It is still a controversial issue as far as brain technology is concerned. The debate goes on over whether or not the brain scans of people practicing homosexuality is really different than those who don't; the same goes with transexuals."

In the 2005 article, Weise said, *Advocates of homosexuality and gay marriage are increasingly playing the science card to support the normalization of homosexuality. Many Christians remain convinced that scientific evidence exists to support the genetic origin of homosexuality. Hence, for many Christians, they can excuse such behavior and feel more comfortable around a homosexual person if all believe they are born with a genetic predisposition.*

Following that statement, Weise continues to decry evidence of such a gene, he calls the "gay gene." He also cites 1991 studies showing what was believed to be a structural size difference in the nuclei of cells compromising the hypothalamus, a gland responsible for emotions and sexual activity, between homosexual and heterosexual males.

Weise said he is not a psychiatrist, nor does he have a medical background. In fact, his background is entirely theological. He said he worked with chaplains and other religious figures in consoling families of dying people and dying individuals. He said he spoke with many homosexuals who were suffering from both HIV and full-blown AIDS.

When asked why he was being considered for a position on the Madison County Mental Health Board, Weise said he was selected by Madison County Board Chairperson Kurt Prenzler who asked for his resume and credentials before making the selection.

Prenzler said he was unaware of the 2005 article by Weise. A copy of it was sent via email to him by Riverbender.com. He has yet to respond. He said he could not comment further on his decision until the article had been read.

Weise did say he would leave his Bible-based beliefs out of decisions made on the Madison County Mental Health Board, adding other people on the board would be a part of the decision-making processes as well.

“Whether you agree with society or not – some people don't because of religious backgrounds – you have to go with the culture,” he said. “From the theological standpoint, you can't just take the Bible in here and say you disagree with it, but of course you can disagree with it.”

LBGTQIA advocate, Robyne O'Mara, of Alton married her wife, Lynne Burnett, in 2011 when homosexual marriage was legalized in Illinois. The couple has been together for 37 years, and O'Mara said she is worried about the potential appointment of Dr. Weise.

“I am strongly opposed to it and very concerned about the LBGTQ community who would be seeking help under their governance,” she said in a Facebook message. “Having someone with a biased and discriminatory view of homosexuality is inappropriate. Promoting a narrow religious agenda should not be a part of any mental health organization.”

In fact, she believed one of the worst issues facing LBGTQIA youth – suicide - is a powerful problem, which needs to be addressed by mental health professionals with compassion and understanding.

“Mental health professionals should only be addressing homosexuality when clients are concerned about it,” O'Mara said. “This is often because they are not accepted or fear they will not be accepted by family, friends and society. LBGTQ youth are five times more likely to attempt than straight youth. If they come from a family that rejects them,

they are eight times more likely to attempt suicide than those with a family who is supportive.”

O'Mara described the selection of Weise as one of the possible appointees tonight as a bad decision, which goes against much of the progress made in recent years as far as the public view of both homosexual marriage and the LGBTQIA community in general is concerned.

“American opinions about the LGBTQ community has changed greatly over the last decade,” she said. “Gallup polled America two years ago and at that time, 66 percent strongly supported marriage equality. Having a mental health board with members who are intolerant of or biased against the LGBTQ community is inconsistent with the views of most Americans.”

Weise's lack of mental health or medical qualifications outside being a member of the clergy is also disconcerting to O'Mara who believes the clergy should not have such a heavy say in the Madison County Mental Health Board. She said other appointees are members of the clergy as well.”

“Madison County has the only state mental health center between Springfield and Ana,” she said. “This area is full of mental health professionals who could be recruited and who would be more appropriated for a mental health board than clergy.”

[A full copy of the article penned by Weise can be found here for context and completeness of his arguments.](#)