

LGBTQ DEMOCRATS CALL ON MOUNT SINAI HEALTH SYSTEM TO PROVIDE GREATER OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO SAMARITAN'S PURSE FIELD OPERATIONS

As the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, overwhelms hospitals across the United States, it is understandable and often necessary for healthcare providers to seek aid from private institutions and agencies that can participate in the expansion of surge planning for medical relief. Nearly half of all COVID-19 cases are in NYC alone, and the Mount Sinai Health System is seeking aid from Christian organization Samaritan's Purse to take on some of the overflow of patients from the hospital.

Claiming itself an "international Christian relief organization," Samaritan's Purse is under the leadership of evangelist Franklin Graham, who boasts a long history of demonizing the LGBTQ community. He has also been accused of using natural disasters as opportunities to prioritize proselytization over adequate medical care.

Following the 2001 earthquake in El Salvador, the New York Times reported that USAID expressed concern that Samaritan's Purse "maintain adequate and sufficient separation between its prayer sessions and its USAID-funded activities." USAID added they were "not comfortable with [Samaritan's Purse] having a half-hour prayer session right before instructing people how to build shelters."

In 2014, Samaritan's Purse published a story on their website detailing how their project, Operation Christmas Child, helped convert a Muslim family to Christianity. It gives us pause that this was considered their shining success story, even though the program was meant to provide gift boxes full of treats and toys to children across the world. Of further concern are Graham's own statements, including telling his base that "we are under attack by Muslims at home and abroad" and that "every Muslim that comes into this country has the potential to be radicalized – and they do their killing to honour their religion and Muhammad."

Muddling this further is the organization's Statement of Faith adhered to by all personnel. The statement includes an unusual focus on sexuality and marriage, as noted in section 9 provided below:

"We believe God's plan for human sexuality is to be expressed only within the context of marriage, that God created man and woman as unique biological persons made to complete each other. God instituted monogamous marriage between male and female as the foundation of the family and the basic structure of human society. For this reason, we believe that marriage is exclusively the union of one genetic male and one genetic female."

This Statement reflects a larger pattern of behavior and actions from the organization to promote evangelism while providing some type of relief service and it is questionable which one comes first. It is important for New York City residents to know that Samaritan's Purse's mission is to provide medical and community relief in a national health crisis and not to see this as an opportunity for predatory proselytizing. We call on Mount Sinai Health System to:

1. Claim responsibility for thorough oversight of Samaritan's Purse's relief operations during COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Ensure Samaritan's Purse personnel do not use this public health crisis as an opportunity to proselytize patients
3. Ensure operations of Samaritan's Purse is held to Mount Sinai's standards of patient care including providing appropriate medical treatment and service to LGBTQ+ identified patients as well as patients diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.
4. Provide transparency to the public on Samaritan's Purse's operations while in NYC including any concerns related to the discrimination of racial, religious, sexual, and gender minorities

**Lambda Independent Democrats of Brooklyn
Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club
Lesbian Gay Democratic Club of Queens
Stonewall Democratic Club of NYC
The Black and Latino LGBTQ Coalition**