



Family Watch International

Promoting Family Based Solutions to World Problems

November 12, 2012

Matthias Groote
Chairman, Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Dear Mr. Groote,

Family Watch International works at the United Nations and in countries around the world educating the public and policymakers on the central role of the family in society and advocating for measures that strengthen women, children and families. To protect and strengthen the family, we also advocate for religious freedom.

We are writing to express our deep concern with the significant lobbying efforts exercised by The European Humanist Federation, the LGBT lobby (International Lesbian and Gay Association or ILGA), and International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) to try to prevent the appointment of Maltese candidate Mr. Tonio Borg as Health and Consumer Protection Commissioner. Their opposition to Mr. Borg's candidacy appears to be based solely on his religious beliefs and personal views regarding the family, homosexuality and abortion.

These lobbying organizations depict Mr. Borg's Catholic beliefs and opinions as incompatible with "European values." However, the fundamental rights of freedom of conscience, belief and opinion are core values on which the European Union is founded, they apply to all citizens (including European Commissioners), and they are guaranteed by the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights. Article 10 of the charter states in relevant part: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion."

We are aware that, pursuant to the Code of Conduct for Commissioners ((2011) 2094), Commissioners should "abstain from making public statements or interventions on behalf of any political party or trade union of which they are members" and "Commission duties must prevail over party commitment." Yet "[t]his rule is without prejudice to the right of Commissioners to express their personal opinions." And Mr. Borg already has committed to abiding by the Code of Conduct in his answers to questions from the European Parliament.

The humanist, LGBT and pro-abortion lobbies would condition the appointment of an EU Commissioner on his stand in favor of abortion and homosexuality. However, EU institutions have no competence on abortion or the definition of marriage and family because those policy issues lie exclusively within the competency of Member States. (*See, e.g.*, EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Article 9 ("The right to marry and the right to found a family shall be guaranteed in accordance with the national laws governing the exercise of these rights,"); Parliamentary questions to the COUNCIL, 30 November 2009, E-5125/2009 (Reply: "The Council would point out that the issue of abortion is the responsibility of the individual Member

States, the scope of Community action on health issues being strictly defined by Article 152 of the EC Treaty.”))

For the foregoing reasons, Family Watch International urges the committee to dismiss the critical comments on Mr. Borg’s candidacy as Health and Consumer Protection Commissioner that are being made by the European Humanist Federation, ILGA, and IPPF.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sharon Slater".

Sharon Slater,
President