

2 December 2014

COL David G. Fivecoat  
Commander  
Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade  
6850 Barron Ave, Building 85  
Fort Benning, GA 31905

Reference Letter of Concern to Chaplain (CPT) Joe Lawhorn

Dear Colonel Fivecoat:

I write to you as CH (CPT) Joe Lawhorn's endorser. As I am sure you know, all chaplains must be endorsed by an endorsing agency recognized by the Department of Defense. Grace Churches International is one such endorsing agency. I retired as an Army Chaplain after serving 28 years on active duty and in the reserves.

Chaplain Lawhorn provided mandatory suicide prevention training to members of his battalion on 20 November 2014. During this training Chaplain Lawhorn gave personal examples as to how he deals with depression. According to some who were present, Chaplain Lawhorn made clear on multiple occasions that he provided his personal experiences of dealing with depression merely as one example among many alternatives. At no time did he say his way was the only or even the preferred way of dealing with depression. And at no time did he deny the validity of any other method.

You state in your Letter of Concern that his presentation was a violation of AR 600-20 and the Army's Equal Opportunity Policy. It is my understanding that no one filed an Equal Opportunity complaint. In fact, it is my further understanding that the Battalion's Equal Opportunity Advisor reviewed Chaplain Lawhorn's presentation and concluded that it was consistent with Army Equal Opportunity regulations and guidelines. Moreover, no one came to the command to express concern. I do not agree that Chaplain Lawhorn violated AR 600-20. Instead, Chaplain Lawhorn did what good chaplains do; he was candid, genuine, and authentic. He spoke from first person to let his soldiers know that he too deals with depression. As far as I know, the only complaint about his presentation was made to a non-military organization. Your Letter of Concern is the only other negative response that I know of.

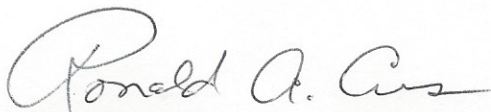
Chaplain Lawhorn is an outstanding Army chaplain. He is one of the few Army Chaplains to wear the Ranger Tab. He works hard to identify with those he serves. It is through this identification that he shared his story. Revealing his personal struggle with depression required a large measure of courage and mutual trust. Those are precisely the virtues that our Army should encourage in soldiers. His story involves his faith journey.

Finally, I also remind you that his use of his faith journey is covered by the Right of Conscience clause passed in the FY2013 NDAA, section 533.

I urge you to reconsider your actions and remove this Letter of Concern from his file. Chaplain Lawhorn should not be punished for simply being an excellent chaplain.

If you decide to continue with the Letter of Concern then I request a personal meeting to discuss this with you. I live in Alexandria, VA but will make a trip to your location as soon as possible. Please call me at 910-578-6082 if you desire to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ronald A. Crews".

Ronald A. Crews  
CH (COL) USA Retired  
Endorsing Agent  
6627 Creek Point Way  
Alexandria, VA 22315