

Hope College stands by its antihomosexuality policy: Board denies alumni petitions

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Hope College alumni who had urged their alma mater to remove a controversial policy on homosexuality say they are deeply disappointed after the Board of Trustees denied their petitions.

“This is just the beginning [of a fight] because this is discriminatory,” said Ron Wiegerink, a 1961 graduate whose family has attended the college in Holland, Michigan, for three generations. “It is not at all what we have come to expect from Hope College.”

Several groups had challenged the college after officials rejected a campus appearance by Dustin Lance Black, screenwriter of an award-winning movie about murdered gay activist Harvey Milk.

The rejection was based on a 1995 policy stating the college “will not provide recognition, financial or logistical support for groups whose purposes include the advocacy or moral legitimization of homosexual behavior.”

In a statement issued on May 7, the college said “well-intentioned Christians may disagree on scriptural interpretation. Still . . . the college aligns itself in its interpretation with its founding denomination, the Reformed Church in America, the orthodox Christian church throughout the ages, and other Christian colleges and universities.”

Two student and community groups, Hope Is Ready and Holland Is Ready, collected more than 800 signatures urging the board to reject the 1995 statement.

Karis Granberg-Michaelson, a 2009 graduate and daughter of RCA general secretary Wes Granberg-Michaelson, asked for prayers for students, faculty and alumni who she said suffer under Hope’s policy.

“Our Facebook page is buzzing with friends asking, ‘Where do we go from here?’” Granberg-Michaelson said. “There is deep hurt.”

The board also denied a request to create a committee to advise the college on guest speakers. The statement said there is “in place an appropriate amount of freedom and oversight for a private and Christian liberal arts college” regarding speaker choices.

However, the board did appoint a committee to expand the college’s statement on homosexuality “in such a way that the Hope community is called to a renewed encounter with a clear, demanding and healing biblical witness regarding human sexuality.” *-Religion News Service*