



**Media Contact:** Mark DeLancey

**Phone:** 603-662-7591

[SalisburyPFLAG@outlook.com](mailto:SalisburyPFLAG@outlook.com)

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **PFLAG SALISBURY STATEMENT ON THE CITY OF SALISBURY HOSTING ANTI-LGBTQ EVANGELIST FRANKLIN GRAHAM'S TIDEWATER TOUR**

PFLAG Salisbury is a chapter of PFLAG, the first and largest national organization dedicated to supporting, educating, and advocating for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, plus (LGBTQ+) people and their families. As an organization that leads with love serving as ambassadors of hope and inclusivity, PFLAG Salisbury envisions a world where diversity is celebrated, and all people are respected, valued, and affirmed, all-embracing of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Franklin Graham, son of famed homophobe Billy Graham, has a long history of espousing detestable anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, causing pain and harm to the LGBTQIA+ community. PFLAG Salisbury is shocked and dismayed by the City of Salisbury's decision to host this bigoted hate-monger who has been condemned by such groups as GLAAD, the Southern Poverty Law Center, Human Rights Watch, and The Advocate. The City of Salisbury will be hosting Graham on the Tidal Health Stage on May 4<sup>th</sup>, which is being promoted in a City generated event on Facebook. Accordingly, the board of PFLAG Salisbury and the thousands of LGBTQIA+ individuals and their families that support our effort to move equality forward on the Eastern Shore are disheartened by the decision to host an event that inevitably will only serve to marginalize our community further.

The words of Franklin Graham ring loud and clear to the LGBTQIA+ community.

In 2021, Franklin Graham said celebrating LGBTQ+ Pride is like celebrating "lying, adultery, or murder." Commenting about Pride Month that "This is an entire month set aside to celebrate a lifestyle that God defines as sin."

In 2014, he praised Putin's draconian anti-LGBTQ laws saying "Isn't it sad, though, that America's own morality has fallen so far that on this issue—protecting children from any homosexual agenda or propaganda—Russia's standard is higher than our own? In my opinion, Putin is right on these

issues. Obviously, he may be wrong about many things, but he has taken a stand to protect his nation's children from the damaging effects of any gay and lesbian agenda."

In 2022, Graham vilified Disney for LGBTQIA+ inclusivity while praising Gov. DeSantis anti-LGBTQ policies. He said that the country "needs more leaders" like Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has been willing to stand up against Disney's political stances. "God bless him and the Florida legislature"

PFLAG Salisbury does not believe that the City of Salisbury seeks to ostracize the LGBTQIA+ community and hopes that they will reconsider hosting and promoting the Tidewater Tour. We also recognize that these are dark and anxious times for the LGBTQIA+ community, and are reminded that our work is far from over, as true equality has yet to be achieved. Let us use this opportunity to join together in unity to end hate and promote love in Maryland.

According to the President of the Board of PFLAG Salisbury, Dr. Nicole Hollywood, "We are deeply saddened the City of Salisbury would choose to endorse an individual who represents hatred and bigotry towards the LGBTQIA+ community. This event will embolden those in the population who are currently fighting to see our families erased from public schools here on the Shore and who spew hateful rhetoric on their blogs, social media posts, and at public meetings. This unconscionable news is causing pain in the hearts of the families we represent, some of whom are new to this area after fleeing states hostile to LGBTQIA+ people. While disheartened, we have not lost hope. It is not too late for us to come together and turn this into a teachable moment where we unite to condemn all forms of hatred and intolerance – even that which hides behind the banner of "Christianity."

Diversity is one of our most significant community assets. PFLAG Salisbury emphatically believes that people thrive and can best live up to their full human potential when they are fully supported and unconditionally accepted. LGBTQIA+ rights have been under attack in legislatures across America, with a record number of anti-LGBTQIA+ bills introduced in 2023. Further, LGBTQIA+ people still experience disproportionate rates of harassment, victimization, and discrimination compared to their cisgender and heterosexual counterparts. The disparities that LGBTQIA+ people experience are even greater in rural environments, such as ours, where resources are at a minimum. PFLAG Salisbury remains committed to community building, enhancing access to resources, eradicating injustice, fostering a culture of inclusion, and breaking the barriers that prevent the LGBTQIA+ community from achieving full equality. To learn more about PFLAG Salisbury, visit [www.SalisburyPFLAG.com](http://www.SalisburyPFLAG.com)

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