

PE1530/J

Dr Robert Saunders Email of 10 November 2014

I am writing as a Scottish academic (currently working elsewhere in the UK) to support Petition PE01530. I am also a member of the British Centre for Science Education.

It is clear to me as an academic teaching and researching in biology and genetics that viewpoints under which evolution is denied and special creation is promoted should have no place in **science lessons** in Scottish schools - evolution is a demonstrable fact, rooted in disciplines of comparative biology, genetics, molecular biology, palaeontology and geology to name but a few. Those who seek to present alternative views of special creation (and its more recent manifestation of intelligent design) therefore seek to replace an understanding of the origins of the diversity of life on Earth, which is based on centuries of physical evidence, with a world view that explains nothing, and makes no testable predictions. In contrast, evolutionary biology is founded on over 150 years of scientific investigation, continues to make testable predictions and indeed yields insights which inform biological understanding with clear implications in diverse areas, including medicine.

This petition has the laudable aim that **science lessons** in Scottish schools do not include un-scientific concepts such as creationism. I have noted comments in the Scottish press (and by Glasgow's Centre for Intelligent Design, which advocates special creation) of late claiming that this petition seeks to restrict academic freedom. I have a couple of comments in this regard.

Firstly, the petition's authors' position is made quite clear in its closing paragraphs. It does *not* seek to exclude discussion of special creation and related ideas: schools may well consider them germane to religious education or other sections of the curriculum.

Secondly, 'academic freedom' does *not* include the right to teach children science-denying concepts such as special creation or its more recent version Intelligent Design (concepts for which there is not a scrap of evidence) and present these as valid science.

If such ideas *were* to be presented as valid science, the educational development of Scottish children would be seriously hampered, at a time when STEM education is particularly important to the future of Scotland.

In closing, I would like to strongly support Professor Paul Braterman's letter of 23/10/14 (PE1530/C), which is a personal response to the Centre for Intelligent Design's correspondence of 10/10/14 (PE1530/A).

This is a personal statement and in making it I do not represent my employer.

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