

Good afternoon,

I am submitting this as my written testimony in support of HB11.

I am a parent in the Olentangy school district. I have three children and could never afford to send all three to private schools, most especially now when inflation is so incredibly high. My husband and I both work, myself two jobs, to ensure we can support our family.

We are a devoutly Catholic family and strive to raise our kids under the tenets of our faith. This is becoming impossible in our public school system.

A few weeks ago, I inquired about the new policy pertaining to Bullying and Harrassment from the Board of Olentangy local schools.

Olentangy Policy per their website:

<https://www.olentangy.k12.oh.us/departments/data-and-continuous-improvement/equity-and-inclusion/reporting-bullying-and-harassment>

The District recognizes the First Amendment rights of students and community members to express their opinions and beliefs on controversial topics. But while at school, students' expression cannot disrupt or attempt to disrupt the educational process. The classrooms are places for learning, and the District's focus will be on educating all of its students. The District hopes discussions will remain civil. However, the District prohibits bullying, harassment, intimidation and discrimination of students. School counselors are available to all students for further discussion or for help reporting bullying, harassment, intimidation or discrimination.

In the email correspondence below, you can see my email to the attorney for the district and her response. To say that Olentangy is trying to eliminate the rights of Christians is an understatement. This is from their Attorney! My kids and their faith is at risk remaining in public schools, but I can not afford to put them elsewhere.

My initial email:

I would like an official statement from the district on the attached policy from the district website.

If my devoutly Christian child who believes in two biological genders male/female and that those genders are decided at conception by God, would they be forced to use the pronouns that a transgender child identifies with or be subject to reprimand from the district if they refuse to do so?

I would like to remind the district of the Shawnee State University case in the 6th Circuit and how it was decided in favor of the professor and his religious beliefs. This was also proven in Kansas as well as Wisconsin and an upcoming case in VA where the Solicitor General and Attorney General are in support of the teachers religious freedom. You can not compel a child with deeply held religious beliefs to go against those beliefs inside the school system.

<https://www.npr.org/2022/04/20/1093601721/shawnee-state-university-lawsuit-pronouns>

<https://www.nixonpeabody.com/insights/alerts/2021/03/29/religious-freedom-ruling>

Please provide me with a written response.

This is the response I received from Olentangy's lawyer:

Ms. King,

I am responding to your e-mail below on behalf of the District. As you are aware, the Olentangy Board of Education has adopted an [Anti-Harassment Policy](#) that prohibits discrimination and harassment based upon a student's sex, including sexual orientation and gender identity. While your children certainly maintain religious rights of freedom at school, those rights do not relieve them of the obligation to comply with Board Policy and the code of conduct. A student purposefully referring to another student by using gendered language they know is contrary to the other student's identity would be an example of discrimination under Board Policy. The Board Policy is intended to create a safe learning environment for all students, free of harassment and discrimination, and does not require any student to affirm or deny any individual religious beliefs, but students must comply with Board Policy and school rules. Thank you for seeking clarification.

Jessica

Jessica K. Philemond | jessica@scottscrivenlaw.com
250 East Broad St., Suite 900, Columbus, OH 43215
t. 614-222-8686 | f. 614-222-8688
www.scottscrivenlaw.com

In essence, the district is stating that children who are devoutly Christian must use the preferred pronouns of an individual, even if it goes against their deeply held religious beliefs. This is a clear violation of the First Amendment Rights and compelled speech.

If we can not expect our Constitutional rights to be upheld by our public schools most especially when it relates to our deeply held religious beliefs, how can we expect to keep our children in these schools?

**Respectfully,
Janine King**