

The Harrisonburg City Public Schools Case

Case Name: *D.F. v. Harrisonburg City Public School Board*

Case Action: Filed complaint in the Circuit Court of Rockingham County on June 1, 2022



Significance: Whether school boards can deny parental oversight regarding their children’s health and compel speech that violates teachers’ beliefs

Background: Parents with children enrolled in Harrisonburg City Public Schools (HCPS) are being excluded from conversations about their children’s mental health, and teachers are being forced to deceive parents about their children’s struggles. Under HCPS policy, teachers are required to affirm the school board’s view on gender identity by using any name and pronoun a student requests. This policy also forbids staff from sharing this information with parents unless the student gives permission. The teachers represented by ADF care about their students and believe parents should not be kept in the dark about their children’s health and wellbeing. Alliance Defending Freedom, representing this group of parents and teachers, filed suit on their behalf against the HCPS Board on June 1, 2022, challenging the school district’s policy that harms children, violates parental rights, and forces teachers to say things inconsistent with their religious beliefs.

Key Points

- Harrisonburg City Public Schools are cutting parents out of profound decisions about their children’s upbringing by forcing teachers to hide critical mental health information about their children.
- Teachers are forced to use names and pronouns that are inconsistent with a student’s biological sex and then are required to deceive parents about their children’s struggles.
- Parents – not bureaucrats – know what is best for their child.

Key Facts

- Parents have a right to make choices about the upbringing and education of their children.
- Schools cannot require teachers to lie to parents about their children.
- Despite its claim that it provides resources to vulnerable students and their families on a “case-by-case basis,” HCPS trained teachers and staff to hide a student’s use of different names and pronouns from his or her parents unless they had the student’s permission.

The Bottom Line: Parents shouldn’t be left in the dark when it comes to profound decisions that involve the wellbeing of their own children.