



April 1, 2022

Dr. Michael G. Richards  
Superintendent  
Harrisonburg City Public Schools  
via email: [mrichards@harrisonburg.k12.va.us](mailto:mrichards@harrisonburg.k12.va.us)

Dear Dr. Richards:

Further to your letter dated January 28, 2022, we understand that you have had several opportunities to discuss our letter of January 14 with the School Board. As we have heard nothing further from you, we understand that your preliminary position and response has not changed.

We appreciate your acknowledgement and agree “that ‘working together with families’” is essential to student success and “that ‘collaboration between school and family’” is key to student wellbeing. We further appreciate your acknowledgement that there are “mental health counselors, medical providers, and others with differing views on how to support families and students with regards to gender transition.”

That being said, as we previously stated, Harrisonburg City Public Schools’ policy and practice does not honor these principles. As we explained in our letter, HCPS’ policy and practice too often excludes, deceives, and usurps the role of parents.

Your assurance that a school counselor may “ultimately” involve “the student’s family . . . as needed on a case-by-case basis,” only amplifies these concerns and confirms that—as stated in HCPS’ materials—it is HCPS’ policy and practice to exclude and deceive parents unless and until a school counselor or child decides otherwise. Further, as stated in our previous letter, HCPS’ policy and practice makes no accommodation for teachers’ free-speech and free-exercise rights. Unfortunately, your letter does not address this concern, nor does it disavow the unconstitutional policies and practices outlined in our letter.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We do not understand your claim that you are “not aware of any concerned parents or teachers within [your] school division who have been impacted by [your] practices.” Numerous teachers and parents have voiced concerns over HCPS’ policy and practice in this regard, both at school board meetings and in writing.

Our clients remain concerned about HCPS' policy and practice, which not only violates parents' and teachers' constitutional rights, but also harms children. We are hopeful that we can resolve this matter amicably. To do so, HCPS must rescind its unconstitutional policy and practice, as stated in our previous letter.

We would like to give you the opportunity to discuss this matter further with the School Board, and note that the Board is due to meet on April 5. Therefore, **by April 15, 2022**, we ask that you confirm in writing that the policy and practice have been rescinded, and that staff and the public have been notified that the policy and practice have been rescinded. Given the passage of time since our initial letter, we trust that this is a reasonable time frame to address these pressing concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katherine L. Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K".

Katherine L. Anderson  
Sr. Counsel, Director of Center for Parental Rights