

Christian School Banned Following Team's Forfeit Against Trans Athlete

A Vermont Christian girls basketball team is continuing to face major consequences after athletes refused to play against a team that had a biological male athlete who identifies as transgender.

As CBN News reported, Mid Vermont Christian School, a K-12 institution in Quechee, Vermont, has been permanently banned from the Vermont Principals' Association, the body overseeing athletics in the state, because the school operates its athletic program consistent with its religious beliefs about sexuality and gender.

Last year, the Mid Vermont Christian School girls' basketball team declined to play against a team that included a biologically male player.

"The Mid Vermont Christian Girls Basketball team qualified for their state-sponsored sports league playoff tournament," Ryan Tucker, an attorney at Alliance Defending Freedom representing the school, told CBN News. "And when they were looking at the seedings, they knew that the team that they were paired up against had a biological male who was professing to be female."

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School officials reportedly contacted the VPA in advance to express safety and religious concerns about competing against a biological male, but they were not given another option to play a different competitor, so they were forced to forfeit the game.

“And, as a result, the state punished them by kicking them, not just obviously out of that tournament, but out of the sports association entirely,” Tucker said. “And so their girl sports season ended and they’ve been kicked out of that league.”

The VPA also “blacklisted” the school from all state-sponsored events in the state including co-ed academic competitions like the Geo-Bee, Science and Math Fair and Debate and Forensics League.

VPA officials argued that the school violated its policies regarding gender, race, and disability awareness and said it would refuse to let the school back into the league unless it updated its policies.

The ADF filed a federal lawsuit asking the league to reinstate the school into the league. U.S. District Court Judge Geoffrey Crawford denied them readmittance.

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In September, the school, students and parents filed a lawsuit with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit citing that VPA’s actions violated the students’ First Amendment rights.

The lawsuit points out that while Mid Vermont has been penalized for their stance, three schools within the VPA have been allowed to forfeit games to avoid competing against a player who had a mask exemption, without consequences.

“The VPA cannot wield such unbridled discretion, accept when schools forfeit games for secular reasons, and then expel Mid Vermont for forfeiting a game based on its religious beliefs. Nor can the VPA exclude ‘an otherwise eligible religious school from a public benefit solely because of its religious exercise,’” the opening brief states.

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