

Hicksville High Nixes Christian Club

Alliance Defense Fund attorneys filed a lawsuit Monday on behalf of a student-led Christian club against the Hicksville Union Free School District for denying recognition to the group because of supposed “budgetary concerns.”

More than 35 other clubs are officially recognized at Hicksville High School, where the principal stated, “other schools may have [a Christian club], but I don’t want this in my school.” The new case is the third one filed by ADF attorneys over the last three years against Long Island school districts for unconstitutionally banning student-led Christian clubs. The other two suits resulted in ADF gaining official recognition for clubs at Lindenhurst Union Free School District and Half Hollow Hills Central School District.

“Public schools cannot ban Christian student clubs simply because they are religious,” says ADF Senior Counsel David Cortman. “If officials at government-run schools did their homework, they’d know that students have a constitutionally protected right to express their beliefs. It’s ridiculous that Hicksville High School says it has no budget for a Christian club but somehow has enough for a ping pong club.”

In October of last year, two students requested official recognition for the Frontline Club at Hicksville High, notifying officials that they had 12 students willing to be active members in the Christian club and a teacher willing to serve as its required faculty advisor. Principal Brijinder Singh denied their request and said she would not allow any religious clubs to receive official recognition. When students noted that 12 other schools in Nassau County had Christian clubs, Singh replied, “Other schools may have it [Christian clubs], but I don’t want this in my school.”

In response to a letter from the students' parents, Singh claimed that limited finances at the school district, which has a budget of \$117 million, precluded any religious club from being recognized. Yet, the district had sufficient finances to continue to grant full benefits to clubs such as the Ping Pong Club, Key Club, Interact Club, Ski Club, Model United Nations Club, and Mock Trial Club. Unlike the Frontline Club, the other clubs are all able to access facilities before and after school, make announcements, post fliers and ads for club activities, conduct field trips during the school day, raise funds, and participate in Homecoming Week activities, among other activities.

Over the years, numerous students have sought to have a Christian club established at the school but have been repeatedly denied by Singh. In a 2008 request denial, she said that any religious club must be "multi-faith," open to all religions, and must allow non-believers to lead the club.