

Atheists Not Required to Recite Pledge Seek to Stop It Anyway

Atheist parents and students are seeking to stop recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools—even though no student is required to recite it—because the atheist students claim to be “offended” by simply hearing the words “under God.”

Alliance Defending Freedom and Massachusetts Family Institute filed a joint friend-of-the-court brief in the case, and the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District expressly incorporated most of the brief’s arguments into its defense of the law that makes the pledge part of public school practice within the commonwealth.

“The Pledge of Allegiance shouldn’t be banned merely because someone who is not even required to recite it feels offended,” says Andrew Beckwith, counsel for the Massachusetts Family Institute. “The pledge unites Americans. The court should uphold the lower court’s ruling and refuse to divide Americans by silencing a voluntary exercise of patriotism just because a few people don’t like it.”

“Simply being offended by something does not make it a violation of the Massachusetts Constitution,” explains Alliance Defending Freedom senior legal counsel Jeremy Tedesco. “As the lower court found, the recitation is completely voluntary, and listening to the words ‘under God’ does not violate anyone’s constitutional freedoms.”

The lower court ruled in favor of the school district and concluded that the phrase “under God” in the pledge serves as a clear “acknowledgment of the Founding Fathers’ political philosophy, and the historical and religious traditions of the

United States.” The atheist parents and students then appealed the decision.