

Charisma News Brief: California Passes Controversial Bill Involving Parental Rights, Gender Identity in Custody Disputes

California's Assembly and Senate have passed a contentious bill, AB 957, raising concerns among conservative and Christian communities that it will infringe on parental rights in custody disputes involving a child's "gender identity." The Democrat-backed legislation, which awaits California Governor Gavin Newsom's signature, calls for judges to consider a parent's stance on their child's gender identity as a factor in custody battles.

The bill asserts that a parent's affirmation of a child's gender identity or expression falls under the umbrella of "health, safety and welfare of the child." The term 'affirmation' encompasses a wide range of actions unique to each child but is mandated to promote the child's overall well-being, according to the bill's language.

Assembly member Lori Wilson clarified that "affirmation" might include a parent's provision of gender-specific toys, nail polish and even choices regarding the child's hair length, as reported by the Associated Press.

In a lopsided Assembly vote of 57-16, AB 957 gained Democratic approval but faced strong opposition from California Republicans and conservative groups. Critics argue that the bill could erode parental rights and be easily manipulated to the detriment of parents who may not fully endorse their child's gender identity.

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The California Family Council expressed its concerns, stating, "This bill will require judges to equate 'affirmation of child gender transition' directly with a child's 'health, safety and welfare' when determining custody or visitation rights. Consequently, parents who do not affirm the chosen gender identity of their child (of any age) risk having their child taken from them."

During the bill's legislative journey earlier this year, attorney Erin Friday, representing a mother whose child previously experienced gender dysphoria, warned about potential manipulation of the law. She stated, "Family court judges will be compelled to favor the parent who will affirm the child's delusion. Parents can easily game the system and use gender as retaliation against each other. What happens when one parent will socially affirm the child but will not agree to medicalize? Does the parent willing to do more transitioning prevail?"

The controversial nature of AB 957 has drawn attention beyond California's borders. Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk, known for his critical stance on transgender ideology, voiced his concerns, calling the bill "a wolf in sheep's clothing" on the social media platform X. Musk contended, "What it actually means is that if you disagree with the other parent about sterilizing your child, you lose custody. Utter madness!"
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