

Christian Clubs Win Federal Court Ruling After Being Blocked by Oakland Schools

A federal court has ruled that the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) must allow a Christian after-school program the same access to school facilities as other non-religious groups.

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The ruling, issued by U.S. District Judge Haywood S. Gilliam, Jr., grants a preliminary injunction in favor of the Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) and its Good News Clubs, which had been denied access to four district campuses.



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The decision comes after CEF, represented by the legal organization Liberty Counsel, filed suit in Dec. 2024, arguing the district had engaged in religious discrimination. According to court documents, school officials had delayed or denied CEF's applications over a two-year period, claiming lack of space, failure to approve community partnership applications, and direct objections to the group's religious content.

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Judge Gilliam sided with CEF, writing in the order that "the law and facts clearly favor" the group's claim that the district violated its free speech rights. The court found that

OUSD's actions were not only discriminatory but also in conflict with established constitutional law.

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"OUSD is simply wrong as a matter of well-established law," Judge Gilliam stated in his ruling, rejecting the district's argument that allowing religious clubs would violate the Establishment Clause. The court noted that since Good News Clubs are held after school, are not school-sponsored, and require parental consent, they are protected under the First Amendment.

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