

Judge Clears Path for Transgender Employee's Lawsuit Against Liberty University

A federal judge in Virginia has ruled that a discrimination lawsuit against Liberty University, filed by a former employee who identifies as transgender, may proceed.

The plaintiff, formerly known as Jonathan Zinski and now identifying as Ellenor, alleges wrongful termination based on gender identity, asserting that the university's actions violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

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Liberty University, a prominent Christian institution in Lynchburg, Virginia, maintains doctrinal policies that regard transgender ideology as conflicting with its religious convictions. Upon hiring in 2023, Zinski agreed to adhere to these policies.

However, after completing a 90-day probationary period, Zinski disclosed ongoing hormone treatments and a transition to a female identity. The university subsequently terminated Zinski's employment, citing a violation of its doctrinal statement and policies.

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In February 2025, U.S. District Judge Norman Moon denied Liberty University's motion to dismiss the lawsuit, stating that the university's employment of Zinski does not interfere with its religious views. Judge Moon concluded that "Liberty's

continued employment of Zinski does not significantly burden Liberty's ability to maintain its views and associate for its expressed purposes."

Liberty University, represented by Liberty Counsel, plans to appeal the decision to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. The university argues that its decision to terminate Zinski was based on its religious values and that it has the freedom not to associate with individuals whose beliefs and conduct are directly contrary to its religious mission.

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This case highlights the growing legal battles faced by Christian institutions as they defend their right to uphold biblical principles in the workplace. Liberty University argues that faith-based organizations must retain the freedom to hire employees who align with their religious mission without government interference.

The ruling raises concerns about whether courts will continue to erode religious liberty by forcing Christian institutions to accommodate policies that contradict their deeply held beliefs.

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