

New York High School Teacher Placed on Leave After Helping Students Launch TPUSA Club

A Spanish teacher at Charles W. Baker High School in Baldwinsville, New York, was placed on paid administrative leave late January after she supported students in establishing a Turning Point USA-affiliated high school club. The move has ignited sharp community debate over political expression in schools, conservative student rights, and administrative overreach.

Jennifer Fasulo, who teaches Spanish at the suburban Syracuse school, was put on leave January 30 after agreeing to help students start a club under Turning Point USA's high school network, Club America, supporters say. The Baldwinsville Central School District issued a brief letter confirming only that "a staff member has been placed on paid administrative leave while a matter is under review," and declined to provide specifics.

Fasulo's supporters argue the leave action followed her voluntary role in assisting students to form the conservative-aligned group. Students quickly organized a petition calling on her reinstatement, asserting in the appeal that she is being discriminated against for her spiritual and political beliefs and that "no educator should be punished for their personal beliefs." More than 2,100 signatures had been collected by mid-February.



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At a February 9 school board meeting, Club America leadership addressed the board directly. The student club president

stated the teacher isn't being evaluated on performance but targeted for her political views, and noted the group aims to encourage civil political discourse. A fellow student attendee described Fasulo as a mentor whose wisdom and compassion is unmatched and questioned why she wasn't teaching in the classroom.

The incident has drawn broader attention from local political figures. Republican state Senate candidate Caleb Slater publicly defended Fasulo, emphasizing that the students, not adults, initiated the club and that the teacher was supporting their constitutional rights.

Opposition has been fuelled by some parents, who have publicly expressed concern about the club's conservative ideology. On social media, critics described Turning Point USA as "terrifying" and likened the ideology to extremist groups – comparisons widely rejected by supporters.

Legal experts note that under the federal Equal Access Act, schools that allow student-led extracurricular groups generally cannot discriminate based on viewpoint if other non-curricular clubs are permitted. Whether the district's review connects to the club at all – or to other personnel matters – remains unclear pending the ongoing investigation.

The case has amplified national discussion on political clubs in public schools, free speech, and whether conservative student voices face disparate treatment. Similar disputes have arisen elsewhere, as conservative student groups pursue official recognition and face administrative resistance.

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