

‘Outrageous’: California School District Blocks Christian Club at Elementary School

A California school district is facing allegations of illegally prohibiting a Christian student club from conducting meetings at a local elementary school, sparking concerns among Christians who believe Christianity is being marginalized in society.

The Hayward Unified School District (HUSD) has faced criticism from Liberty Counsel, an advocacy group, for rejecting three separate requests from the Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) to permit one of its Good News Club chapters to meet at Fairview Elementary School.

Before the pandemic hit in spring 2020, a Good News Club had been regularly meeting at Fairview Elementary. However, when clubs were allowed to return to district schools, CEF submitted three separate requests to reinstate the Good News Club’s on-campus meetings at Fairview, but the school district remained unresponsive.

In contrast, other clubs, such as the Girl Scouts and Girls on the Run, were permitted to resume meetings on school grounds after regular school hours.

On August 21, Liberty Counsel sent a letter to the school district outlining the laws and policies that prohibit the district from denying CEF’s use of school facilities. The letter demanded an immediate approval of CEF’s request to hold a Good News Club after school at Fairview Elementary School. As of September 6, the district had not issued a response.

Mat Staver, Founder and Chairman of Liberty Counsel, emphasized that it is unlawful for the school district to deny the club's meeting request. "According to the law, Good News Clubs must be given equal access as non-religious groups on public school campuses," Staver stated. "Equal access means equal treatment, including the use of on-campus facilities, fee waivers, time of meetings and announcements. Liberty Counsel will work to ensure this happens."

When contacted for comment, a Hayward Unified School District spokesperson told The Christian Post that officials were "investigating this matter and have no comment at this time."

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In 2001, the Supreme Court, in a 6-3 decision in the case of Good News Club v. Milford Central School, ruled that public schools cannot ban Good News Clubs from meeting on school property after regular class hours solely because the club is Christian in nature.

However, since that time, there have been increased efforts to prohibit Christian student groups from meeting on public school property outside of regular class hours.

In March, Liberty Counsel filed a lawsuit against the Providence Public School District in Rhode Island after officials there prevented Good News Clubs from meeting at schools for nearly two years. A federal district court ruled that the school district had discriminated against CEF by not allowing the Good News Clubs while permitting other clubs to meet. Consequently, the Providence Public School District is now permanently mandated to treat the Good News Clubs "on an equal basis with similarly situated organizations, such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Girls on the Run." The court declared that Christian clubs are entitled to equal access "on the same

terms” as other after-school clubs.

In July, Providence PSD agreed to a consent order that granted the Christian student club “access to District facilities that is equal to and on the same terms as other similarly situated non-religious organizations offering programs to students in the District.”

Good News Clubs do not charge any fees and welcome children, regardless of their religious beliefs, with written permission from parents. Currently, there are 3,285 Good News Clubs across the United States, with approximately 2,000 of them meeting after school in public elementary and middle schools.

This controversy underscores the reality that in modern societies, Christianity is being marginalized and replaced with secular ideologies, particularly within educational institutions.

In today’s digital age, where children are exposed to false and damaging worldviews and ideologies, teaching a biblical worldview from an early age is crucial. The clash between secular ideologies and religious beliefs has surfaced in various ways, such as the attempt to ban the Bible from the Davis School District in Utah earlier this year.

First Liberty Institute, in response to the ban, emphasized the undeniable educational value of the Bible for students and the importance of preventing hostility towards any particular religion or religious text in school settings. The Davis School District initially banned the Bible but later reversed its decision unanimously. {eo}

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