

Sporting Goods Store Kicks Out Mom for Complaining About Man in Women's Bathroom

A Northern-California mom became alarmed when her preteen daughter said she was uncomfortable with the man who entered a store bathroom while she and another young girl were using it. But the response of store management left the mom stunned and shaken.

On August 24, Michelle (not her real name) was with her 12-year-old daughter and her daughter's 10-year-old friend at the REI sporting goods store in Santa Rosa.

Upon leaving the store, Michelle noticed that the girls were upset. When asked, the girls stated that a man had come into the store restroom while they were using it.

Michelle, who advocates for victim's rights and knows that it only takes seconds for girls to be molested, returned to the store to notify management of the safety and privacy concerns. To her surprise, a store manager stated that they do not decide who people are or what they can do, and Michelle's concerns were interpreted as being anti-LGBT.

Michelle was then asked to leave the store, and obscenities were hurled by other patrons at her family as they drove out of the parking lot.

Pacific Justice Institute (PJI) is sending a letter to both the REI store in Santa Rosa and REI corporate headquarters in Washington state, demanding to know whether Michelle is welcome at the store and what steps the retailer is taking to protect the safety and privacy of customers using public restrooms.

The letter points to California's civil rights laws, the building code mandating gender-specific restrooms, and the right to privacy set forth in the California Constitution.

Brad Dacus, president of Pacific Justice Institute, commented, "Retailers and other places of public accommodation face significant liability if they do not take adequate steps to ensure the safety and privacy of their restrooms. This incident raises serious concerns about the policies and practices of REI, and it appears that political correctness is putting young girls at risk."

Earlier this year, PJI attorneys drafted the Personal Privacy Protection Act, a statewide initiative that is currently gathering signatures. The PPPA focuses on sensitive facilities like restrooms and seeks to encourage businesses to protect customer privacy.