

# FAITH & JUSTICE

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Must Be Protected

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## The Finnish Line

A Nation Watches As One Of Its Most  
Respected Leaders Goes To The Supreme Court  
For Speaking Her Faith

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**Cover Photo:**  
Hanne Salonen / Parliament of Finland



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## Minutes With Kristen

# The Irreplaceable Role Of Parents

By Kristen Waggoner, CEO, President & General Counsel

**G**rowing up with a mom and a dad is an incalculable gift. Sadly, that gift is out of reach for far too many children. But it's also why foster parents, like Bryan and Becca Gantt of Vermont, are true heroes to the children they welcome into their homes.

I recently had the chance to visit with the Gantts at an Alliance Defending Freedom event. Inspired by their faith, this remarkable couple answered the call to become foster parents in 2016, focusing on children with drug

### **[S]trong parent figures can protect children.**

“

Kristen Waggoner

dependencies and special needs. Since then, they've adopted three children who are now thriving in a loving home.

Yet, despite being model parents, the state revoked the Gantts' license because they wouldn't violate their beliefs and preemptively agree to treat a child as the opposite sex. Because of this, the state deemed them unfit to foster or adopt. We are now representing the Gantts in a religious discrimination lawsuit.

Bryan and Becca are a shining example of how strong parent figures can protect children, particularly from gender ideology. This toxic ideology has already created scores of young victims — including “detransitioners” like Prisha Mosley.

**A**t 14, Prisha suffered sexual assault. At 15, she was hospitalized for depression, and by 16, she was diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder and an eating disorder. But instead of providing Prisha with loving support and medical care, her doctors and counselors lied to her.

Despite Prisha's history, after one visit, a resident determined she was having a “gender identity crisis” and that this was her underlying medical problem.

A pediatrician then encouraged Prisha to “transition” without her parents' knowledge or consent. When Prisha's parents found out, the pediatrician and a counselor told

them that Prisha was a boy trapped in a girl's body.

Soon after, Prisha was put on testosterone and, at 18, underwent a double mastectomy.

**W**hen Prisha recounts her story — her voice deep, her breasts gone, her body scarred — I can't help but tear up. She shares how she wished just one person had stood up for her and told her the truth. But a corrupt medical establishment manipulates and bullies young people like Prisha — and their families — into silence.

If there's a silver lining, it's that Prisha and other detransitioners are now suing for medical malpractice thanks to law firms like Campbell Miller Payne, PLLC, which was founded by a Blackstone Fellow. Prisha's case is being funded, in part, through ADF's Grants & Funding program.

This is why we work to protect children from these dangerous drugs and surgeries and why we defend parental rights. Parents, both natural and adoptive, know their children best and love them the most. When they are empowered to protect, they can prevent tragedy. **A**



Bryan and Becca Gantt



# News & Quick Takes

Case Updates From Around The World

## California

ADF attorneys representing The Babylon Bee, a satire website; and Kelly Chang Rickert, a California-based attorney, filed a federal challenge to two California laws that censor online content, including political memes and parodies of politicians.

Signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom, the laws ban posting “materially deceptive” content online that is “likely to harm” politicians’ “electoral prospects” during election season. The suit explains that the laws interfere with The Babylon Bee’s and Rickert’s freedom of speech, as protected by the First Amendment.

In July, Newsom responded to a parody video of Vice President Kamala Harris saying the video “should be illegal.” The California Legislature responded by fast-tracking the bills, which the governor signed into law on Sept. 17.

“Gov. Newsom has no constitutional authority to act as the humor police,” says ADF Senior Counsel Jonathan Scruggs. “While lawmakers act as if posting and resharing memes is a threat to democracy, these laws at the end of the day censor speech California politicians don’t like.”



Seth Dillon, CEO, The Babylon Bee

## New York

A diverse group of investment advisors and other finance experts, along with thousands of Costco members, are calling on several major retailers to resist political pressure to sell chemical abortion drugs at their pharmacies.

Organized by ADF, the group sent a series of letters to Costco, Walmart, Kroger, Albertsons, and McKesson after the New York City comptroller urged the companies’ CEOs to “immediately begin taking the necessary

## New York

Faced with a lawsuit, the State University of New York Cortland approved the request of two students to form a Turning Point USA chapter. University officials had initially denied the club recognized status because of its conservative views.

Students Gabriella Delorenzo and Megan Rothmund formed the chapter in the fall of 2023, but the student government association withheld recognition after fellow students and a professor

questioned and demeaned the group’s views. When the students raised the issue with university President Erik Bitterbaum, he warned that they would likely be denied if they reapplied, telling them, “We silence voices all the time in this country. That’s the tragedy and also the greatness of democracy.”



Megan Rothmund (left) and Gabriella Delorenzo

After ADF filed a lawsuit, the student government association officially recognized the chapter and later agreed to revise the policy that had allowed the conservative group to be denied recognition.

**We silence voices all the time in this country.**

“

Erik Bitterbaum,  
President, State University  
of New York Cortland

steps” to dispense the abortion drug mifepristone or risk losing investor confidence. Signatories advised the CEOs of the enormous legal, health, and business risks associated with abortion drugs and advised the companies not to dispense them.

“Entering the abortion drug marketplace is an inescapably political decision,” says Robert Netzly, CEO of Inspire Investing. “This is just like Bud Light (InBev), Disney, and Target. All three have taken affirmative stances on controversial issues in recent years and have yet to recover from the backlash.”

Fourteen state treasurers and other financial officers also wrote letters to the companies to disregard the comptroller’s efforts.



Nicaraguan political prisoners released in September include (clockwise from left) César Facundo Burgalín Miranda; Walner Omier Blandón Ochoa and his wife, Marisela Mejía Ruiz; and Álvaro Daniel Escobar Cabrera.

## Nicaragua

Eleven pastors and ministry leaders were among 135 Nicaraguan political prisoners released in September. The 11 had served with Puerta de la Montaña, the Nicaraguan branch of a U.S.-based ministry. They were freed weeks after the Inter-American Court ordered their release as a result of a petition filed by ADF International.

Targeted for their ministry work, the religious leaders were imprisoned in March on sham convictions of money laundering. Though no evidence of illicit activity was presented during their trial, they received sentences ranging from 12 to 15 years and were fined over \$80 million per person. They were barred from contacting legal counsel or family during their imprisonment.

“ADF International is privileged to have advocated for [the ministry leaders],” says Kristina Hjelkrem, legal counsel for Latin America for ADF International and leader of the advocacy effort. “We thank God for their release and will continue to pray for them as they recover from this ordeal.”

Nicaragua is 30th on Open Doors’ 2024 World Watch List of countries where Christians face extreme persecution.

## Switzerland



Swiss authorities removed a child from her parents’ care after the couple objected to her “gender transition.” Now, the parents are being forced by a Swiss court to hand over documents that would allow their daughter to apply for a change of her “legal sex” in the civil register.

In 2021, the then-13-year-old told her parents that she felt her gender identity was male. The couple responded with care and support, obtaining mental health care for her. But they declined a doctor’s recommended puberty blockers and rejected her school’s attempt to “socially transition” her. After the school involved the state child welfare agency and an LGBT lobby organization, the daughter was separated from her parents and placed in a government-funded youth shelter.

Backed by ADF International, the parents are seeking reinstatement of their parental rights and to reunite with their daughter, now 16.

“These parents are living every parent’s worst nightmare,” says Felix Boellmann, director of European advocacy for ADF International. “Their child has been taken away from them simply for trying to protect her from harm.”

## There is no place for Orwell’s ‘thought police’ in 21st century Britain.



Isabel Vaughan-Spruce

### United Kingdom

A Christian woman arrested twice for praying silently outside an abortion facility in Birmingham, England, received a financial settlement from West Midlands Police in acknowledgment of her unjust treatment.

With support from ADF UK, Isabel Vaughan-Spruce issued a claim against the police for false imprisonment, assault and battery, and a breach of her human rights. She received a payout of £13,000 (\$16,900).

Isabel Vaughan-Spruce’s second arrest caught worldwide attention in a viral video, in which police accused the pro-life volunteer of committing an offense by silently praying. “You’ve said you’ve been engaging in prayer, which is the offense,” an officer is heard saying in the video.

“There is no place for Orwell’s ‘thought police’ in 21st century Britain,” Vaughan-Spruce said after the settlement was announced. “I’m delighted that the settlement that I have received today acknowledges that.”

Isabel Vaughan-Spruce







Special Feature

# Why Students' Private Spaces Must Be Protected

By Karen Kurtz

**K**atie Rowland was just 11 years old when she walked into the girls' restroom at her Oklahoma middle school and was startled to find a boy standing inside.

A school district policy allowed students who identified as the opposite sex to choose the restroom they preferred. But Katie didn't know about the policy, and this was the first time she'd come face-to-face with the awkward situation it allowed.

"I freaked out and yelled at him, asking him why he was in the girls' restroom," she says. "It ... made me feel very uncomfortable."

At a school where about 30 boys in Katie's grade identified as girls, her surprising encounter that day would be the first of many. She began to open the restroom door cautiously, prepared to walk right back out.

"If I had to use the restroom, I would go and see if a boy was there," she says. "If no boy was there, I would go to the restroom as fast as possible and then leave." Eventually, it wasn't only boys with gender confusion who visited the girls' restroom.

"Over time, boys who did not identify as girls used the girls' restroom because they knew they could get

**The federal government has ignored biological reality, science, and common sense, and children are suffering as a result.**

“

Rachel Rouleau, ADF Legal Counsel

away with it," Katie says. "They used it as an excuse to use the restroom with girls."

To Katie, it seemed there was only one option: avoid the restroom altogether on school days. This meant waiting nearly nine hours between the time she boarded the bus in the morning and the time she returned home.

Teachers and school administrators made the restroom situation seem normal, she says, "like we all just had to accept that boys could use the girls' restroom." But it never felt normal to her.

"It does not matter how they identify," she says. "They are still boys."

Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys are defending Katie and other students across the country who face the risk of embarrassment and worse that can result when schools ignore the biological distinction between male and female.

Policies like the one that allowed males in the girls' restroom at Katie's school are at odds with Title IX, a 1972 federal law that prohibits schools from discriminating "on the basis of sex." Designed to create equal opportunities for women in education and athletics, the law is best known for making possible a surge in the number of women and girls playing school sports.

But the Biden administration set out to reverse the progress made through this decades-old law by attempting to redefine "sex" in Title IX to include "gender identity." Instead of the biological meaning intended in 1972, the new definition would rely on "an individual's sense of gender."

Redefining "sex" as "gender identity" forces public schools to allow boys to compete in girls' sports and to enter girls' restrooms, locker rooms, and other private spaces as long as the boys identify as girls.

"The federal government has ignored biological reality, science, and common sense," says ADF Legal Counsel Rachel Rouleau, "and children are suffering as a result."

Shared private spaces like restrooms and locker rooms, she says, not only create an uncomfortable situation for girls but are also potentially dangerous. "They put the privacy and safety of girls in jeopardy. And the issue is not just hypothetical."

ADF is also representing Adaleia Cross, a West Virginia athlete who was forced to compete against a male teammate. A seventh grader at the time, Adaleia was surprised when "B.P.J.," a boy who identifies as a girl, joined her middle school girls' track and field team at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year. At the time, she wasn't especially worried about the competition.

Two years her junior, she knew that B.P.J. wasn't likely to beat her in their shared events — shot put

and discus. She was right ... at first. Both were relatively new to the two sports, but Adaleia could generally throw farther. She beat B.P.J. in competition almost every time.

But the following school year, B.P.J. was taller, his voice deeper, his strength noticeably improved. An average athlete the year before, he suddenly became one of the team's top three throwers in shot put and discus.

By spring 2023, he was frequently beating Adaleia in competitive events — and taunting her afterward.

Soon, B.P.J.'s comments became something more than a simple annoyance. He made sexual remarks to her from time to time, and, for a while, she simply ignored them. But the problem escalated during

her final year of middle school.

"The comments became much more aggressive, vile, and disturbing," Adaleia says. At least once, he made a vulgar comment in the girls' locker room that she and her female teammates were forced to share with him.

She reported the comments to her coach and then to school administrators, who said they would look into the matter. But Adaleia never heard back from any of them, and nothing changed.

"I was told that B.P.J. was on the girls' team because B.P.J. identifies as a girl," she says, "but the girls on the team never talked like that."

## It does not matter how they identify. They are still boys.

“

Katie Rowland

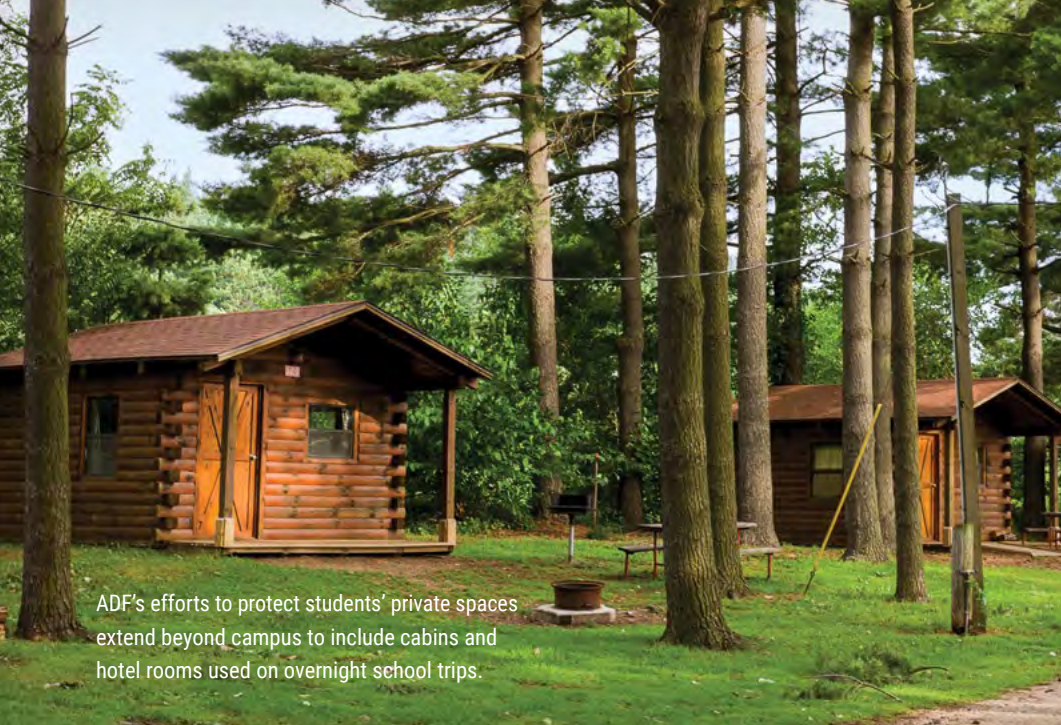


The comments became much more aggressive, vile, and disturbing.

“

Adaleia Cross





ADF's efforts to protect students' private spaces extend beyond campus to include cabins and hotel rooms used on overnight school trips.

**It makes me angry knowing that adults do not care if I feel scared, unsafe, or uncomfortable at school.**

“

Katie Rowland

**I**t's girls who have the most to lose when schools ignore biological reality, Rouleau says, but boys are also affected.

“Boys should also have privacy in their bathrooms and other private spaces,” she says. “It goes both ways.”

In December 2022, B.R., an 11-year-old boy, stepped onto a school bus and eagerly joined his classmates for “Outdoor Lab,” his Colorado school district’s annual sixth-grade camping trip. B.R.’s parents were told their son would be in a cabin with six to 30 other boys, including four male high school counselors.

It wasn’t until B.R. was in the mountains — without any way to contact his parents — that he realized one of his counselors was an 18-year-old girl who identified as “non-binary,” placed in the boys’ cabin because of the school district’s Transgender Students Policy.

The female counselor not only slept and changed in the boys’ cabin but was also tasked with supervising showers — standing outside the shower stalls as the boys entered and exited. B.R. and many of his cabin mates decided together that they wouldn’t shower at all during the four-day Outdoor Lab; they were too embarrassed and scared to shower in front of a female.

B.R.’s mom remembers the shock she felt when she picked up her son at the middle school after his week at Outdoor Lab, and the first thing he told her was, “I had a girl in my cabin.”

She and B.R.’s dad are concerned about future overnight trips sponsored by the school district. They

don’t want any of their children to share a room with a student or leader of the opposite sex, but they also don’t want them to miss out on educational opportunities.

**A**DF is involved in five federal lawsuits to defend Title IX and the safety of girls and boys. In all five lawsuits, ADF has received injunctions from the courts to temporarily stop the federal government from redefining “sex” in Title IX while litigation continues. In 26 states and

thousands of schools across the country, students are protected from the attempt to rewrite Title IX while these lawsuits proceed.

Thanks to an Oklahoma law passed in 2022, Katie is one of the students protected by these broad efforts to defend Title IX. The law

states that only girls are allowed in the public school girls’ restrooms.

But Katie knows if efforts to redefine “sex” in Title IX ultimately succeed, she could again face the discomfort of encountering boys in the girls’ restroom. “It makes me angry,” she says, “knowing that adults do not care if I feel scared, unsafe, or uncomfortable at school.”

ADF’s work to defend Title IX is driven by the biblical truth that God created people male or female, each with biological differences and inherent dignity. “It’s important to stand for truth,” Rouleau says. “The attempted changes to Title IX are just attempts to force people to disregard biological reality.

“That’s why we’re in these battles.” **A**

## **Boys should also have privacy in their bathrooms and other private spaces. It goes both ways.**

“

Rachel Rouleau, ADF Legal Counsel



## Alliance Profile

# Mike Sharrow

By Jay Hobbs

In a conversation with fellow Christian business owners, one restaurant owner conveyed his frustrations about the current generation.

Young employees at his Dallas locations seemed uniformly ill-prepared to work a quality shift. Constantly glued to their phones and lacking basic social

skills, his restaurant's workforce had become a revolving door marked by detached incompetence.

"Why do you think that is?" one business owner asked.

"Well, half the kids I'm hiring don't have fathers at home," the restaurateur answered. "Kids aren't being taught the same values we grew up with."

That conversation proved to be a turning point. The restaurant owner left motivated to shape the next generation. If his workers had grown up without direction and stability, then

maybe he could create a caring culture that would help fill those gaps. It worked. Employee retention at the restaurant tripled. Young employees steadily began

coming to Christ as many of them encountered, for the first time, leaders who took an interest in them and their success.

It's turnarounds like this that inspire C12 Business Forums CEO and President Mike Sharrow. An entrepreneur and church leader in Texas, Sharrow became involved with C12 in 2011 before taking the reins of the organization in 2016. A key ally for Alliance Defending Freedom's work with faith-based business owners, C12 serves over 4,200 business leaders across the U.S. and on five continents.


Conversations like the one that transformed the Dallas restaurant chain are central to C12's mission. Serving companies with a workforce of 10 to 10,000-plus, C12 facilitates events and gatherings where Christian business leaders can encourage and challenge each other to "build great businesses for a greater purpose and to view their business as a ministry platform," Sharrow says.

"I think most Christians in business understand they have a high capacity to fund great causes," Sharrow said. "They also have a chance to shape lives."

These business leaders can have a greater influence on the culture than they realize, he says. "I want to awaken the idea that God cares about business. He cares about what we do, how we do it, and why we do it."

Sharrow, who also serves on the advisory council for ADF's Viewpoint Diversity Score, says one of the major benefits of the C12 experience is the emboldening that comes when Christian business leaders meet together and realize that they are far from alone.

While there is much work to be done to equip and strengthen Christian business leaders in the U.S. and abroad — particularly in the face of a corporate culture that's increasingly hostile to biblical values — Sharrow is optimistic as he watches a new generation make its way to the C-suite.

That generation, he's found, has an intolerance for delayed gratification, particularly around purpose and significance. "We're seeing younger and younger entrepreneurs get involved and do courageous things early in their careers," he says. "They are looking for how to operationalize the passion they have for important issues like biblical justice and life, and we want to do everything we can to help them do that." 

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**LEARN** how ADF is defending the rights of Christian business owners to lead according to their values. Visit [ADFLegal.org/Corporate-Affairs](https://ADFLegal.org/Corporate-Affairs).

**I want to awaken the idea that God cares about business. He cares about what we do, how we do it, and why we do it.**

“

Mike Sharrow



Mike Sharrow



Cover Story

# The Finnish Line

A Nation Watches As One Of  
Its Most Respected Leaders  
Goes To The Supreme Court  
For Speaking Her Faith

By Chris Potts





*Somewhere out there, a certain Sunday School teacher has a lot to answer for.*

**P**äivi (PIE-vee) Räsänen was still a very young girl when her parents decided she could go to the church in their small village of Konnunsuo, just inside the Finnish border from Russia. It's a region known for hundreds of beautiful lakes and one less beautiful prison, where Päivi's father worked, tending the gardens. While he and his wife were not Christians, they respected the faith and didn't feel it would do little Päivi any harm to learn a bit of the Bible.

Time would prove them both wrong and right about that, but as a child, Päivi was fascinated with the things she learned in those Sunday morning classes.

"It was very, very affecting and important for me," she remembers, nearly six decades later. "I was about 5 or 6 years old, and I remember well, even at that age, those talks the teachers shared with us about Jesus."

Biblical concepts like grace and sin, salvation and judgment, she says, "were so concrete. Even as a small child, you have to think about these issues. And I remember praying that I would have my sins forgiven, and that Jesus would come into my life."

How seriously Päivi took her new conversion became clear shortly afterward, when the prison warden came riding along the road by her family's house on his bicycle. She urgently waved for him to stop. He did, looking down into her big, earnest, little-girl eyes to ask what was wrong.

God's Word has guided Päivi's life since it first captured her heart as a 5-year-old girl in Sunday school.



"Do you love Jesus?" she asked. "You can't get to heaven if you do not know Him."

Embarrassed, the warden looked around and saw Päivi's mother, standing nearby.

"You should take your baby out of that Sunday school *today!*" he yelled. "Before she loses her mind!"

If her mother was concerned about her husband's boss's opinion, she didn't show it. Päivi stayed in Sunday school.

But it was by no means the last time Päivi spoke up for her faith. Or drew sharp opposition for doing so.

**I had a deep, deep feeling this was in God's hands, that He was opening a door.**

“

Päivi Räsänen

Although she went to the University of Helsinki to study medicine, Päivi spent at least as much time there sharing her faith. For five years, she led a student missionary group in weekly door-to-door visits around campus, drawing other young people into discussions about moral values and cheerfully engaging them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

“It was an important time in my life,” she remembers, “an important schooling. Every week, I was discussing quite difficult issues with students from different backgrounds and areas of study. I had to think very thoroughly about how my faith stands — how the Bible stands — in the face of these difficult questions. I learned to discuss ideas. I learned to debate.”

Her extracurricular evangelism also changed her life in another way. Twice during those years, Päivi joined other Christian students from all over Finland on mission trips to London, led by a tall, smiling young man named Niilo Räsänen.

He and Päivi took a shine to each other, began to date, and soon were married. They went on to raise four daughters and a son, as Niilo became a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church and head of one of the denomination’s seminaries.

Päivi, meanwhile, went into general practice medicine. She quickly developed a reputation as both an excellent doctor and a thoughtful, outspoken defender of life.

“I had decided already during my studies that I would not end the life of a child in the womb,” she says. In her spare time, she wrote books and pamphlets on the subject. That led to television and radio appearances, where she drew on those debate skills she’d honed back in college. Her strong, winsome arguments began to attract wide attention. People asked if she was interested in standing for office — perhaps campaigning for a seat in Parliament.



“At first I refused,” she says. “I thought it was not my place.” But people continued to urge her to run ... and one of those urging was her husband.

“Actually, I think I was the first,” Niilo says. “But she wasn’t interested.” One day, though, he drove her through Helsinki, past the building where Parliament met. He pointed at the building. “Look at your future workplace,” he told her.

“He knew,” Päivi says.

**What I’ve found is that what God has promised, He is faithful [to do].**

“

Päivi Räsänen





Clockwise, from left:

Päivi is intent on her studies at the University of Helsinki.

Päivi and her husband, Niilo, at their home in Finland.

Päivi in the early days of her parliamentary career.

Päivi and Niilo as newlyweds.



The 1990s brought a severe economic recession to Finland. Päivi’s patients were hit hard by what was happening and often poured out their worries to her.

“I could see a lot of problems in people’s lives,” she says — problems born of what was happening in her country’s politics and culture. “I thought I would like to try and influence the society and improve the welfare of the people. To not only give them medicine, but to try to heal the consequences of these problems.”

A person in Parliament could do that, she decided. The next time someone suggested she stand for office, Päivi was ready. “I answered, ‘Yes.’”

**P**äivi Räsänen has served continually in the Finnish Parliament since 1995. For 11 of those years, she acted as chairman of the Christian Democrats, a party she chose for its support of her Christian values and unswerving

## We don’t worry. Whatever happens, we will take it as God’s will and see what comes next.



Niilo Räsänen

opposition to abortion. For four years, she also served as her nation’s minister of the interior, overseeing internal national security and migration issues.

“I have felt, very deeply, that this has been my calling,” she says. “I’ve been happy to have the opportunity to influence our society, our country, and to try to make better living conditions for people, especially families and children and the elderly.

“In some ways, it is very similar to working as a doctor. People come to you to talk about their problems, and then you try to find some solution. That’s been my work in Parliament.” She’s learned, she says, that “politics is one way to show love to your neighbor.”

You might think that attitude would have enhanced Päivi’s interactions with Finland’s religious leaders — “church affairs” was another aspect of her responsibilities as minister of the interior, and her work brought her into contact with most of the prominent clerics of her country.

Still, even knowing these leaders so well, she was stunned to learn, in the summer of 2019, that the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland — her own denomination and the one in which her husband served as a pastor — had pledged its full support for an upcoming Helsinki Pride event.

**I**knew that our church at that time was already quite divided,” Päivi says, “and there was a lot of progressive liberal thinking among our pastors.” Still, “that the whole church leadership had decided to support the event, publicly and financially, was a strong disappointment to me — and to many other Christians.”

Many friends confided to her their intention to resign from the church. Päivi seriously considered joining them. “I was praying, ‘What should I do now? Should I leave the church, too?’”

But, on her knees, her Bible open before her, “I received a very clear vision,” Päivi says, “that now was not my time to jump out of this sinking boat — that I should try to wake people up. I was especially worried about our young people losing their trust in the Bible, with the leadership of the church teaching something so much against what the Bible teaches.”

I received a very clear vision that now was not my time to jump out of this sinking boat – that I should try to wake people up.

“

Päivi Räsänen

“What the Bible teaches.” After a moment, she reached for her cell phone, turned to Romans 1:24-27, and snapped a photo. She pulled up her X (formerly Twitter) account, attached the picture, called it to the attention of the Evangelical Lutheran leadership, and added one simple question:

*“How does the doctrine of the church, the Bible, fit together with the fact that shame and sin are raised as a matter of pride?”*

She pressed “Tweet.”

And her life changed, forever.

**P**äivi’s communique thoroughly rocked “the boat” and woke up everyone in it. Including Päivi.

A few weeks after she had posted the tweet, she opened a newspaper and read — to her astonishment — that local police had received a complaint about her message and were investigating. Their evidence would determine whether the nation’s chief prosecutor would bring her to trial for her beliefs.

“At first, I didn’t believe it,” Päivi says. “I thought, ‘No, no, this must be from a summer intern who doesn’t know what he’s saying.’” But a call to her local precinct confirmed that officers were indeed looking into the matter. When could she come in and speak with them?

Over the next few months, Päivi would be required to sit for a total of 13 hours of police interrogation.



Päivi is always happiest outdoors, enjoying the beauty of her native Finland.



Explain this word, ‘sin.’

“

Helsinki policeman

“It was an absurd situation,” she remembers, “sitting there in a small room in the station, being interrogated about my Christian beliefs.” The policeman asking questions kept an open Bible on the table between them. He pointed at it as he probed her theology: “What is Romans about?” “Tell me about the first chapter.” “Walk me through Genesis.” “Explain this word, ‘sin.’”

Päivi found the whole thing almost laughable. “Just a few years before, I was the [cabinet] minister in charge of police, and now I was sitting here, being interrogated.” But the people of Finland understood what was happening: one of the most well-known political figures in their country was being detained at police headquarters for quoting Scripture to bishops.



“Someone joked on social media that maybe we were going to have Bible studies at the police station,” Päivi says, smiling. “But ... these discussions were very good. I had the opportunity to [share with] that policeman very thoroughly the teachings of the Bible, from Genesis to the message of the Gospel ... because he asked me to.

“Do you really want to hear this?” she asked him. “Because this has been such an important book to me. When I read it, I understand the message of the Gospel: that Jesus has died for my sins.”

“It was lovely,” she says, smiling, “telling that to the policeman.”

She left an impression. “If it were up to me,” he told her, after their last discussion, “you wouldn’t be sitting here. I hope we don’t have to meet like this again.”

They didn’t. But Päivi had to wait more than a year to learn that the Finnish prosecutor general was formally charging her with three counts of “agitation against a minority group” — one, for publicly voicing her opinion on marriage and human sexuality in a 2004 pamphlet distributed at her church; two, for comments she made on the same topics on a 2019 radio show; and three, for the tweet directed at the leadership of her church.

Under Finland’s criminal code, “agitation against a minority group” falls under the section of “war crimes and crimes against humanity” punishable by tens of thousands of dollars in fines — and up to two years in prison.

**P**äivi knows better than most the penalty for breaking this particular law. After all, she was a member of the Finnish Parliament when it unanimously adopted these changes to the country’s criminal code 13 years ago.

“In Finland, as in all European countries, you have a law that prohibits so-called ‘hate speech,’” says Elyssa Koren, legal communications director for ADF International, which has supported Päivi’s case from its earliest days, coordinating her defense and serving on her legal team. Like most such laws, she says, this one carries with it the possibility of criminal charges. That’s not all the laws have in common.

These laws are often presented, Koren says, as a way “to reduce social tensions, to curb hostility, to foster conditions of peace. It’s a very reductive way of looking

at societal problems ... the idea that if you have less ‘hate speech,’ you’ll have less hate.” Unfortunately, she says, the laws are also “vaguely worded, overly broad, and don’t define ‘hate.’

“‘Hate,’ really, is just in the eye of the beholder,” she says. “And what happens is what we’ve seen with this case: people are prosecuted for perfectly peaceful expression in the name of preventing ‘hate.’” When the law was passed in the Finnish Parliament, “nobody was much aware what the consequences would be. Päivi’s case is the litmus test for how the law will be applied to religious speech.”

Päivi says she sees now that she and her colleagues underestimated the implications of the law they all voted for. Many serving with her in the Finnish Parliament, she says, believe that “if I were to be convicted, then we would have to change the law.



Päivi speaks to a reporter after her second trial in August 2023.

“I’m not the only one in Finland who has spoken and taught about these issues,” she says. “There are thousands and thousands of similar writings. If my writings are banned, then [many] sermons and interviews and writings would be in danger. If I were convicted, it really would start a time of persecution among Christians.”

Which, unfortunately, seems to be the idea.

**The prosecutor’s ignorance of Christian theology was palpable, and she made no secret of her determination to see Päivi and Bishop Pohjola punished for views so contrary to contemporary secular morality.**



Päivi and Niilo in front of the Helsinki courthouse with their legal team.



Päivi and co-defendant Bishop Juhana Pohjola enjoy a moment of levity with Paul Coleman, executive director of ADF International, outside the courtroom.

**P**äivi and her co-defendant — Bishop Juhana Pohjola, who is charged with publishing the 2004 pamphlet on marriage and sexuality Päivi shared with her church — were stunned when the prosecutor opened her case against them by showing Bible verses on a courtroom screen. Her ignorance of Christian theology was palpable, and she made no secret of her determination

to see Päivi and Bishop Pohjola punished for views so contrary to contemporary secular morality.

“It’s become clear,” Koren says, “that they are not prosecuting Päivi Räsänen ... they’re really prosecuting the Bible and Christian beliefs at a very high level. What’s at stake is the fundamental question of whether people — particularly people in the public eye — have the freedom to voice their Christian convictions in the public space.”

“What the prosecutor essentially is calling for,” says Paul Coleman, executive director of ADF International, “is the criminalization of the orthodox Christian

position on fundamental Christian doctrine regarding marriage, sexuality, sin, and so forth. It’s shocking to see such brazen anti-Christian legal argumentation within a criminal context.”

Even more unsettling, Coleman says, is the fact that “there’s nothing unique about the situation in Finland. It doesn’t have worse law than anywhere else. It has a better legal system than most places. If this can happen in Finland, it can happen in any Western country.”

In fact, he says, “the same censorial sentiments exist in the U.S. — at all the heights of power. On almost every college campus. In all of the major companies, particularly Big Tech. They exist in much of the U.S. political system and in the mindset of many law professors.

“That line — between what we’re seeing take place in Finland and what could very soon happen in the U.S. — is far smaller than most people realize. Or want to admit.”

**I**n March 2022, the Helsinki District Court unanimously acquitted Päivi and Bishop Pohjola of all charges, saying, “It is not for the district court to interpret biblical concepts.” A month later, the prosecutor appealed that ruling — something she is allowed to do under Finnish law. In November 2023, the Helsinki Court of Appeal confirmed the lower court’s acquittal.

The prosecutor then appealed both decisions to the Finnish Supreme Court, which has agreed to hear the case.

What the prosecution has secured, Koren says, “is another year or two during which Päivi is still under



Päivi often steals away for quiet moments of prayer.

**It’s become clear that they are not prosecuting Päivi Räsänen ... they’re really prosecuting the Bible and Christian beliefs at a very high level.**

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Elyssa Koren, Legal Communications Director, ADF International





During Päivi's second trial, a crowd turns out at the courthouse to show its support.



Päivi listens to courtroom testimony with allied lawyer Matti Sankamo.

## That line – between what we're seeing take place in Finland and what could very soon happen in the U.S. – is far smaller than most people realize. Or want to admit.



Paul Coleman, Executive Director, ADF International

this pressure. Her reputation and her integrity as a civil servant are clouded by the fact that she continues to be criminally prosecuted for her peaceful expression.”

Still, Niilo says, “We don’t worry. Whatever happens, we will take it as God’s will and see what comes next.”

“It’s remarkable,” Päivi says, “how God uses this.” From the beginning, she says, “I had a deep, deep feeling this was in God’s hands, that He was opening a door. There’ve been so many opportunities to testify about Jesus ... before these courts, in front of police officers, even to those that vehemently disagree with me. It’s given me a lot of joy.

“I’ve received messages from people who’ve told me that, as they’ve followed the trials and listened to my interviews, they’ve started to read the Bible and pray. They’ve found Christ.

“I got a call from a 22-year-old man who told me that he knew almost nothing about Christianity but was listening to a radio interview where I said, ‘If you want to know Jesus, you can pray, He will come into your life.’ He has been a Christian now for two years. Jesus came into his life.”

“As a lawyer who feels called to defend freedom of religion and speech,” Coleman says, “it’s been the great privilege of my career to be [able] to support and defend Päivi. I’m not exaggerating by saying she is, ultimately, the reason why we exist.

“She’s tough. Really tough. Yet ... always smiling, always kind. Over the past five years, I’ve sat through two trials with her, sat around her kitchen table, seen her in every context in between. She’s just such an unbelievably authentic person. The same in every context, whether being cross-examined for her faith, or hosting us for dinner after the hearing.”

During one hearing, Coleman says, “the prosecutor — who, bear in mind, has said horrible things about her and wants to put her in jail — was visibly unwell. And, at one of the breaks, Päivi just went over to sit with her, ask how she was doing, connect with her on a human level.

“She wasn’t doing it for the cameras,” he says. “No one saw it. But I thought, ‘What a remarkable person this is.’ It’s just such a privilege to be called as a ministry to stand alongside her and say, ‘We’ve got your back.’”

“I have received much more during this legal process than I have lost,” Päivi says. “When I was young, I read from those texts where Jesus says that, when they take you in front of courts and kings, you’ll be His witness, and He will provide what to say. I could never have believed I would ever be in this kind of situation. But I think it’s increased my trust in God.

“What I’ve found is that what God has promised, He is faithful [to do]. He really works as He has said. Jesus is alive, and He stands by His word. And He is good.”

Somewhere, a certain Sunday school teacher must be very proud. 

My View

# Oregon's Religious Discrimination Hurts At-Risk Kids

By Bud Amundsen

## Who am I?

That's a question we all ask — especially as teenagers. As teens, everything is changing around us. We want to know how we fit.

I asked that question myself. Growing up in an idyllic, Mayberry-like small town in rural Pennsylvania, I remember jumping on my bike and riding down narrow winding roads to the creek to fish.

I felt alive outdoors. But my father didn't.

My dad was a natural bookworm. A Christian school teacher and a strict disciplinarian, he wanted me to follow the Bible and his rules. I grew up thinking I knew God, but unfortunately, I had just learned the rules.

Little did I know, the “Hound of Heaven” was after me — in His time.

When I was 12, a farmer and friend of our family invited me to help bale hay. That relationship changed my life. He taught me to hunt and drive a tractor. Sitting in the front seat of his pickup truck, I heard sermons that I didn't even know were sermons — conversations that helped me see the Gospel in action. He gave me what so many troubled teens today need.

I had no way of knowing that I would one day lead a ministry that connects Christ-following adults with lost and hurting kids.

Or that I would have to go to court to defend that ministry.

“Man's chief end,” the Westminster Shorter Catechism says, “is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.” Somewhere along the way, the Lord embedded this in my heart. But it was a winding path to understanding that truth.

After going to college and meeting my wife, Krista, I began a career as an investment broker with Edward Jones. Our marriage was rough at first. We didn't understand each other or the pain we were both dealing with from our difficult childhoods. I was struggling to see how we were going to make it. How could we live like this?

Just a few months later, my wife and I had *the fight* — a heated argument that turned the tide of our marriage. We looked at each other and said, “We'd better figure this out or we're gonna live in hell for the rest of our lives.” God then opened doors for us to understand that we were both living out of the trauma of our past. By His grace, we are happily married today, 35 years later.

With my marriage's turnaround came the understanding of how necessary it is to process the traumas and difficulties of childhood. I wanted to help others do what we had done. I left my job as an investment broker to work with at-risk teens.

**Kids who come to the ministry need hope, encouragement, and someone to imitate.**

“

Bud Amundsen

Bud Amundsen





In August 1991, I joined what would become Youth 71Five Ministries, where I now serve as executive director. Just like that farmer invested in me, I would be investing in teens who were trying to figure out who they are and what their purpose is.

*“Lord God, you are my hope. I have trusted you since I was young.”* This verse, Psalm 71:5, inspires the name and the mission of Youth 71Five Ministries.

Kids who come to the ministry need hope, encouragement, and someone to imitate. So many are growing up without good role models — without a farmer of their own.

Located in southern Oregon, 71Five serves K-12 students, inner-city youth, teens who are stuck in gangs or embroiled in violence, and more. Our mentoring ministry offers a variety of programs, from youth centers to vocational training centers to camps. Most of all, we focus on building the trusting relationships necessary for kids to thrive. By helping kids engage with Christ-following adults they can count on, we’re seeing lives transformed.

## **71Five was accused of being discriminatory because we only hire Christians, even though we serve young people of all faiths and backgrounds.**

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Bud Amundsen

That’s why, from 2017 to 2023, we partnered with the State of Oregon through its Youth Community Investment Grant Program. In 2021, we even had the top-rated application for the Youth Violence and Gang Prevention grant.

But that all changed when an anonymous person complained that we discriminate by only hiring Christians.

Relationship-building is central to our outreach to young people. It’s imperative that our ministry hires only those who share our Christian beliefs.



Pat Hagerty, camp counselor, leads high schoolers in singing at 71Five Camp, an annual event that brings students together for outdoor activities and memorable learning experiences.

All our board members, employees, and volunteers agree to a statement of faith.

This was well-known and had never been a problem. But after the complaint, state officials booted our ministry out of the grants program. We were stripped of over \$400,000 in previously approved grant funds. 71Five was accused of being discriminatory because we only hire Christians, even though we serve young people of all faiths and backgrounds.

We reached out to Alliance Defending Freedom, which helped us file a lawsuit against Oregon for religious discrimination.

The financial strain caused by our loss of grant funds initially forced us to forgo many ministry opportunities. Thankfully, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit has allowed us to receive needed funds from the state as our lawsuit continues. This is an encouraging step. But if we ultimately lose the case, kids will suffer. Kids like Beau.

Beau participated in one of our programs, but I didn’t think our ministry impacted him at all. He came for the fun and ridiculed everything I said.

But, 20 years later, he asked me to lunch. This once disengaged teen was now passionate about sharing God’s love with the lost and broken — something that he’d seen caring adults do through 71Five decades before. Our efforts, which seemed futile at the time, had transformed his life. He now works as our operations director.

Mentor relationships matter. I’ve seen that in my own life, in Beau’s life, and in the lives of thousands of other young people. My hope is that Oregon officials will end the discrimination that hinders our programs and hurts kids in need. 🏹

Q & A

# Os Guinness

By Karen Kurtz

**O**s Guinness is an Anglo-Irishman, author, and social critic. Born during World War II in China, where his parents were medical missionaries, he was a witness to the climax of the Chinese Revolution of 1949. He was educated in England, where he completed his undergraduate degree at the University of London and his Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Oxford. An advocate of truth and religious freedom, he is the author or editor of more than 30 books, including *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*, *A Free People's Suicide: Sustainable Freedom and the American Future*, and *The Global Public Square: Religious Freedom and the Making of a World Safe for Diversity*.

He is the 2024 recipient of Alliance Defending Freedom's Alan E. Sears Leadership Award, which recognizes servant leadership, humility, character, dedication, and commitment to victory. He lives with his wife, Jenny, in the Washington, D.C., area.

Dr. Guinness was interviewed at several sessions of ADF Summit 2024. This Q&A was adapted from those conversations.

**F&J:** You've written on calling. How did God use the biographical details of your life and coming out of China to shape your vocation?

**OG:** I was 9, nearly 10 when I left China. When the Communists came in, they festooned the town with loudspeakers. There were trials in the morning, executions in the afternoon, and fear was everywhere. It gave me a very realistic view of life and a very realistic view of Marxism, whereas many Americans have only just woken up to what it is. But it was actually the '60s that gave me a sense of history and the importance of our generation.

The first time I came to America, I was 26. I met Mario Savio, the leader of the Free Speech Movement. I went back to Europe, and I realized what was happening in America in the counterculture was significant for the world. That's what first gave me the sense that I've got to understand this and keep in touch with it, and I've tried to do so ever since.

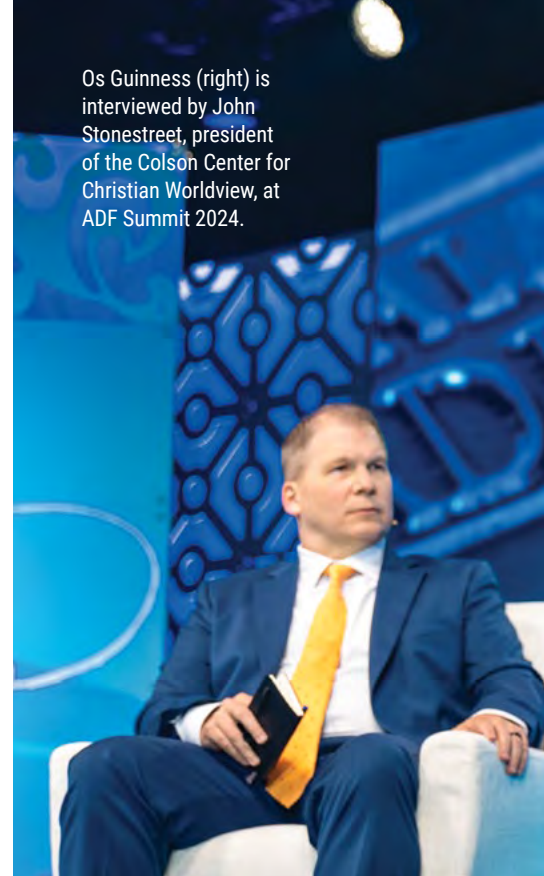
In 1967-68, the year I visited America, Mao's Long March became the American radicals' theme. They called for a long march through the institutions: slowly, incrementally, win the colleges and universities, win the press and the media, win Hollywood entertainment — and then sweep 'round and win the culture. In '68, no one would have believed that there would be woke business or woke military. They were the bastions of conservatism, and they've fallen.

**In '68, no one would have believed that there would be woke business or woke military. They were the bastions of conservatism, and they've fallen.**

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Os Guinness

Os Guinness (right) is interviewed by John Stonestreet, president of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview, at ADF Summit 2024.



**F&J:** You have coined a phrase: *We are in a civilizational moment*. What do you mean by that?

**OG:** All the great civilizations of history have risen through a certain inspiration and dynamic that made them great. But at a certain point, they lost touch with what made them great. At that moment — the civilizational moment — you only have three broad choices: renewal of the inspiration, solid replacement of the inspiration, or decline. Of course, the previous civilizations are either in ruins, museums, or history books. What made the West was the Gospel and the Bible as a whole. And yet today, the intelligentsia of the West have almost universally rejected its Jewish and Christian roots. And





we're at that civilizational moment — either renewal or decline.

**F&J:** What do you see as the greatest cultural threats?

**OG:** There are many things talked about, from the ballooning deficit to the open border, but there are three things that are not covered as they should be. One of them is the ideological polarization between those who understand America from the perspective of the American Revolution, which was largely but not completely biblical, and those who understand America from the perspective of the French Revolution and its ideas.

Postmodernism, multiculturalism, and critical theories are all heirs of the French Revolution. That is the deepest polarization. Then you have an institutional polarization between the elites and ordinary people. And then you've got what has been called "cultural climate change" — a crisis

of faith, a rejection of truth, and the erosion and breakdown of social ties, including the family. So, put those three crises together, and they are calling into question the American Republic.

**F&J:** Do you think that renewal and revival are possible in this civilizational moment?

**OG:** Absolutely. You see in the Bible the renewal movements — Hezekiah, Ezra, Nehemiah. In Christian history, you see revival.

You think of the impact of the First Awakening, which saved Britain from the French Revolution and contributed to the American Revolution. You think of the Second Great Awakening in the 19th century with the hundreds of reform movements it created. So, we have a powerful view of revival and the possibility of turning around. In Deuteronomy 30, you read, *If you*

## Every American is responsible for the American Republic.

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Os Guinness

*return to Me, the Lord says, I will return to you and restore you.* So, we should have a passionate view of the possibility of revival. That doesn't mean we sit back passively and do nothing. No. We've got to be faithful and doing all we can now.

**F&J:** What responsibility do we have at this time? What is the call of the Christian?

**OG:** In America, people say to me, "I'm like the early church. I'm keeping my head down, I'm faithful." And I say to them, "That's rubbish." The early church was under an imperial dictatorship. They hardly had any room to move politically.

Every American is responsible for the American Republic. For the evangelicals who drop out of voting, it's a failure of discipleship and citizenship. We pray for the Lincoln-like leader, but we get on with doing our part at our level. Leadership is not simply the person at the top — the president, the CEO, the general. It's everyone in their sphere, taking the initiative and responsibility to do what needs to be done where we are: standing up for the truth and speaking out. It takes everyone.

**F&J:** Where do you see our greatest hope in today's culture?

**OG:** Christians should always be people of hope because God is sovereign, and we know the end of the story. When I was a 10-year-old in China, I never saw my parents waver in faith. My brothers died; the church was being persecuted. My dad would summarize it: *God is greater than all. God can be trusted in all situations. Have faith in God. Have no fear.* That's the bedrock for me. Whatever happens, come hell or high water, our trust is in the Lord. **A**



Opinion

# This Governor Urges Schools To Lie To Parents

By Matt Sharp and Jordan Carpenter



California Governor Gavin Newsom and the state's legislature have decided they can raise kids better than their parents can.

In July, Newsom signed AB 1955, a bill severing the essential line of communication between parents and teachers that protects students during their formative years. This isn't just bad policy; it violates the U.S. Constitution by codifying a reckless disregard for parents' fundamental rights.

Recently, several California school districts enacted commonsense policies that require open communication with parents. Schools must notify parents if a student is, for example, injured at school, being bullied, or experiencing distress over gender. This "no secrets" approach properly aligns the parent-student-teacher relationship and empowers those who know and love their children best — parents.

Amazingly, AB 1955 outlaws these policies. According to the law's sponsors, notifying parents violates a student's right to privacy. That isn't true. When a school possesses information that affects a child's well-being, the parents have a right to know.

If a child is struggling in class, consistently skipping lunch, or trying out for a team, the school doesn't violate

**Hiding information from parents violates their fundamental right to direct their child's upbringing, education, and care.**

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anyone's rights by informing the child's parents so they can make decisions in their child's best interest. This is doubly so when it comes to a child expressing a new gender-based identity, which may lead the school to make fundamental changes to a child's school experience, like using different restrooms or being addressed with a new name and pronouns.

**H**iding information from parents violates their fundamental right to direct their child's upbringing, education, and care. The state must provide a safe environment for students. It cannot use that responsibility as an excuse to trample the fundamental rights of parents. Properly understood, these interests aren't in conflict.



## When schools improperly prioritize parental rights, children lose the benefit of receiving guidance from their most motivated and least conflicted advocates.

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As Alliance Defending Freedom explained in written testimony submitted to the legislature, parents’ rights are essential to protecting children. When schools improperly prioritize parental rights, children lose the benefit of receiving guidance from their most motivated and least conflicted advocates.

In Wisconsin’s Kettle Moraine School District, school officials insisted on imposing a male identity on a 12-year-old girl who expressed confusion over her identity at school — even after her parents told them to stop. Only weeks after Tammy Fournier and her husband withdrew their daughter from the school, the girl’s confusion resolved. A court ruled the district violated the parents’ rights, and the school apologized.

Similar cases are being litigated in Michigan, New York, and elsewhere. AB 1955 opens the door wide in California for stories like these.

Vulnerable children who experience a disconnect between their sex and their sense of gender deserve to have their parents guide their health care. But now, California mandates that schools keep parents at a distance from their children, filling the gap with “school-based supports” including “[c]ounseling services” and “physical and mental health providers.”

This is backward. The state’s legal obligation to parents is not decreased when a child is faced with — in the words of AB 1955 — “deeply personal decisions, impacting health and safety as well as critical relationships.” In fact, this is when parents’ involvement is *most* needed.

Because of its fatal flaws, the bill already faces at least one lawsuit, and state officials will waste taxpayer dollars to defend an unconstitutional and unwise policy. It’s a shame Gov. Newsom and the legislature were willing to move forward anyway. But that’s what happens when the government thinks it knows how to raise children better than their parents do. **A**

*Matt Sharp is senior counsel with Alliance Defending Freedom and director of its Center for Public Policy. Jordan Carpenter is legal counsel and also serves with the center. This was adapted from an article that originally appeared in the Los Angeles Daily News and other Southern California News Group newspapers on August 8, 2024.*

Consider how a middle-school girl in California’s Spreckels Union School District was allegedly coached to bind her breasts at school and to distrust her mother at a time when she needed her mother’s loving direction the most. The district paid nearly \$100,000 to settle the lawsuit filed by the distraught mom.

Tammy Fournier and her husband stood up against a Wisconsin school district that tried to impose a male identity on their 12-year-old daughter despite their objections.







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