

Parents group suing Linn-Mar on transgender student policies

By Adam Carros

Published: Aug. 3, 2022 at 2:47 PM EDT

MARION, Iowa (KCRG) - A group representing Linn-Mar parents is suing the school district arguing its transgender student policy approved this year violates the constitutional rights of parents and students.

The lawsuit filed in federal court in Iowa's Northern District from a group called Parents Defending Education names the Linn-Mar School Board and superintendent Shannon Bisgard. Parents Defending Education is a nationwide group which, it says, includes parents of children in the Linn-Mar district.

[The school board passed the policy in April](#) after heated school board meetings with parents and community members on both sides of the issue. Linn-Mar has said the policy simply formalized what school staff were already practicing to support transgender students in order to comply with state and federal laws. At those meetings parents expressed anger at what they saw as being cut out of their child's education and health decisions. Critics argued those views were transphobic and that the policy protects transgender students who might not otherwise feel safe expressing their identity and emotions.

That policy allows students to create a gender support plan that, among other things, requires staff and students to address a child by a new name or gender identity pronouns, change the child's name on government documents, use the restroom and locker room matching the child's gender identity, and participate in sports programs that match their gender identity. Part of the policy notes that staff would not notify parents of this gender support plan or gender identity without the student's consent.

The lawsuit claims the policy violates the First and Fourteenth amendment rights of students who hold beliefs about biological sex by forcing them to affirm the beliefs of administrators and fellow students. It also notes examples of students with special needs where parents worry the students could be confused and start a gender identity plan without parental knowledge or be punished for not following the policy.

It also claims the policy violates the 14th Amendment of parents in regards to their right to know what actions Linn-Mar is taking with their child.

TV9 reached out the Linn-Mar district for comment on the lawsuit but has not heard back.

Alan Ostergren, a prominent conservative lawyer in Des Moines, is representing the parents' group bringing the lawsuit. He has previously represented other conservative legal causes, including helping Donald Trump's campaign leading up to the 2020 election and helping Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks in challenges to her 2020 election to Congress. He also represented parents in fighting against mask mandates in schools in Iowa.

Governor Kim Reynolds and Rep. Ashley Hinson [held a private, closed-door meeting with Linn-Mar parents](#) shortly after the policy, pointing to it as a reason to support Reynolds' proposal for school vouchers in Iowa.