

## California Judge Halts Controversial School Policy on Transgender Students

Recently, a California judge has taken action by issuing a temporary restraining order against the Chino Valley Unified School District Board of Education's controversial "forced outing policy." The policy, which Attorney General Rob Bonta has criticized, would compel schools to notify parents when a student requests the use of a name or pronoun different from their gender as indicated on official records.

While delivering his oral ruling, Judge Thomas Garza expressed concern about the policy's potential harm to LGBTQ+ students, asserting that it unfairly singles out and treats this protected group differently from other students. He issued the restraining order as a precautionary measure to protect students' rights.

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This decision follows Attorney General Rob Bonta's announcement of a lawsuit aimed at challenging policy enforcement. Bonta has argued that the policy infringes on various state protections designed to safeguard students' civil and constitutional rights.

Attorney General Bonta welcomed the court's decision, emphasizing its significance in upholding the rights of LGBTQ+ students and ensuring their safety. He stated, "While this fight is far from over, today's ruling takes a significant step towards ensuring the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of transgender and gender-nonconforming students."

The Chino Valley Unified School District Board of Education, which serves approximately 26,000 students, recently adopted the mandatory gender identity disclosure policy. This policy not only requires parental notification when students request name or pronoun changes but also mandates notification when students seek access to facilities or programs inconsistent with their official records.

The school district spokesperson defended the policy, prioritizing all students' safety and positive educational experiences. They emphasized that parental notification would not occur if there were concerns about the student's safety, abuse, injury, or neglect related to their gender identity.

In response to the judge's decision, ABC News contacted the Chino Valley school board for comment.

It's important to note that adopting this Chino Valley school board policy has sparked controversy and public protests. Some board members have used anti-transgender rhetoric to support the policy, with one member even referring to transgender individuals as suffering from a "mental illness."

LGBTQ advocates argue that forcibly disclosing a student's transgender identity can be perilous for those who feel unsafe or supported at home or in other environments. Research shows that transgender youth are more likely to experience mental health challenges, including anxiety and depression, due to discrimination and stigma.

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Studies also reveal that schools with inclusive policies that support and affirm transgender students' identities positively impact their mental health and academic outcomes.

The lawsuit filed by Attorney General Bonta contends that the policy violates California's Constitution, state anti-discrimination laws, and various legal provisions. Bonta has also condemned similar policies implemented by other school districts across the state.

A hearing on the attorney general's motion for a preliminary injunction is scheduled for October 13, 2023. This ongoing legal battle underscores the broader debate over the rights and protections of transgender and gender-nonconforming students in California's education system.

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