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“Whoever would overthrow the liberty of a nation must begin by subduing the freeness of speech.”
Benjamin Franklin

Resources Offer Information on States’ Adjustment to New Federal Plan for School Choice

Since the newly passed Tax Reform law expanded 529 savings plans to include K-12 educational expenses, many states are working to ensure their state plans reflect the new federal changes. The 529 savings account program was originally established to encourage savings for only higher education, but the recently passed tax reform bill expanded these plans to allow the savings to be used for K-12 educational expenses as well. Federal law allows deposits to be made in these savings plans with after-tax dollars, and interest and investment gains on the deposits in these accounts are free from federal taxes, as are withdrawals that are used for qualified educational expenses. Additionally, [most states](#) offer additional tax benefits for contributions to the plans, making these an enticing way to save for educational expenses. Forty-nine states plus the District of Columbia have at least one 529 program, and some states even allow residents to take advantage of 529 plans opened in other states. The K-12 expansion created in the tax reform bill became effective as of January 1, 2018; however, several states need to update their tax codes in order for their programs to reflect the change in 529 plans. Some state programs have already adjusted to the federal law (including IN, IL, NY, and UT, which automatically adjusted; and others which officially recognized the changes: AL, DE, GA, KY, MD, MS, MO, NV, SC, TN, UT, VA, WV, and WI). Currently, [Ohio](#) and [Arkansas](#) are pursuing legislative action to update their 529 programs. Several groups and organizations are working to compile updated information which will help parents navigate the changes and take advantage of this new opportunity. The AACCS has provided tips and resources through a recently released [memo](#). The *Washington Post* also recently published an [article](#) which offers advice and suggestions for parents to consider when deciding the financial feasibility of opening up the accounts. Furthermore, [SavingforCollege.com](#) provides a list of states that are up-to-date with the federal law, along with a resourceful program to guide parents interested in pursuing investments in this area. The AACCS has also provided a [state-by-state guide](#) which offers links to each state’s program so that parents and interested school personnel can easily find the most current information for their state’s program.

Ohio Judge Rules Against Parental Rights

A judge in Ohio recently ruled that a 17-year-old girl who identified as a boy should be removed from her parents’ custody so that she can continue to transition to the opposite sex. The child had lived as a girl until 2016, when she began treatment at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center for anxiety and depression, later being diagnosed with transgender dysphoria. The parents’ lawyer, Karen Brinkman, [explained](#) that their refusal to allow their child to go through hormone therapy stemmed from their religious beliefs, “contacting

medical professionals, collecting thousands of hours of research,” and “their observation of the child.” Despite that, Judge Sylvia Hendon [wrote](#) that the child “has a legitimate right to pursue life with a different gender identity” making her decision to remove the child based on “the best interests of the child for the few remaining months of minority.” The child will live in custody of her maternal grandparents, who support her decision to transition. Judge Hendon also urged the legislature to create “a framework by which it could evaluate a minor petitioner’s right to consent to gender therapy . . . based upon the child’s maturity.” Standing in opposition to such laws, Ohio Lt. Governor Mary Taylor instead [proposed](#) legislation to stop “government intervention into the rights of families and parents, wherever that fight will be.”

Michigan Legislators Ask Attorney General to Investigate Church for Identity Workshop

Michigan State Reps. Adam Zemke and Darrin Camilleri are urging the state attorney general to investigate the Unashamed Identity Workshop, held by Metro City Church and FORGE Ministries. [Zemke and Camilleri](#) say the church is practicing conversion therapy, a “wildly inappropriate” pseudoscience, although the [pastor of Metro City Church](#), Jeremy Schossau, maintains that “that cannot be further from the truth.” Pastor Schossau explains that the workshop was developed for “kids wondering not only about sex itself but . . . about their own sexual orientation,” adding that the girls enrolled in the workshop were raised in the church and trust its teaching. While there is no evidence to support their claims, Zemke and Camilleri believe the church should be investigated for violations of the Michigan Consumer Protection Act. In addition, Zemke has introduced a bill that would join Michigan with 9 other states and Washington, D.C., that prohibit mental health professionals from trying to change the sexual orientation or gender identity of a minor. The [Family Research Council](#) currently has an online petition imploring Zemke and Camilleri to rethink their request for an investigation, insisting that “to dictate what a local church must teach regarding its theology is totalitarian in nature.” Despite the backlash, Metro City Church remains true to its traditional beliefs about human sexuality and its desire “for people to be pointed to God’s Word.”

In Case You Missed It:

[Weekly Market Update](#) provided by Jeff Beach of the [AACS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch](#)

[How to Respond to the LGBT Movement](#)

[New Office Focused on Religious Freedom Receives 300 Complaints in a Month](#)

[Iowa Senate Approves Bill to Ban Abortions Once Heartbeat is Detected](#)

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