



A Publication of the American Association of Christian Schools

The Washington Flyer
July 5, 2019

“I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder, as the opening of a grand scene and design in providence, for the illumination of the ignorant and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth.”

John Adams

Maryland Christian School Files Lawsuit to Defend Its Religious Liberty

Bethel Christian Academy in Savage, MD, has filed a [lawsuit](#) against the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), charging that officials of the MSDE violated the school’s religious liberty when they determined the school could not participate in the state’s school choice program. The MSDE’s decision was based on the school’s policy regarding biblical marriage and human sexuality. [Maryland’s school choice program](#), Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST), was passed by the Maryland legislature in 2016 and provides vouchers to over 3,000 low-income students to attend the school of their choice. Schools that participate in the BOOST program must follow a nondiscrimination policy in their student admissions process. While the [law states](#) that “nothing herein shall require any school or institution to adopt any rule, regulation, or policy that conflicts with its religious or moral teachers,” it also emphasizes that “all participating schools must agree that they will not discriminate in student admissions on the basis of race, color, national origin, or sexual orientation.” Shortly after the program was implemented in 2017, the MSDE asked for the policy handbooks of several Christian schools that participate in the BOOST program. After reviewing the handbook, the MSDE determined that Bethel’s policy regarding marriage and sexuality was discriminatory; therefore, the school could not participate in the BOOST program. Furthermore, the MSDE is requiring the school to pay back any money received through the program, an amount totaling \$102,600. As a result, several students are no longer able to attend Bethel, due to the loss of financial help, and the school is facing an extreme financial burden. The [lawsuit](#) challenges that “the sole reason MSDE and the BOOST Advisory Board disqualified Bethel from BOOST was the school’s statement on marriage and biological sex, neither of which constitute discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in admissions.” The nondiscrimination rule for BOOST also applies to schools that participate in the state’s Nonpublic Textbook and Technology Program and the Nonpublic Aging Schools Program, both of which offer help to eligible private schools for textbooks, computer hardware and software, and school safety improvements. Bethel participated in both of these programs, but is no longer eligible for these as well due to the decision of the MSDE. Christiana Holcomb, legal counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) which is representing Bethel in this case, [pointed out](#) that “the state has refused to play by its own rules. While Bethel fully complied with the program’s requirements, Maryland let its hostility toward Bethel’s religious views, not the law, decide the school’s eligibility. Maryland’s families deserve better; that’s why we’re asking the court to address the state’s hostility.”

NYC Schools to Include Social Emotional Learning in Curriculum

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and School Chancellor Richard Carranza recently announced plans to change the curriculum and safety practices in NYC schools to include an emphasis on social emotional learning (SEL). SEL is a popular educational philosophy which focuses on teaching values and behavior over academics, and NYC's plan will include a strong emphasis on helping students navigate their feelings and emotions, according to a recent [op-ed](#) by Mayor de Blasio and Chirlane McCray. The changes will affect the curriculum for every class and grade level and will also include an agreement with the NYPD to replace some of the safety police officers in the schools with social counselors in an effort to meet the social and emotional needs of students before these needs turn into misdemeanors that require police action. While SEL is gaining support in educational settings, a [recent analysis](#) by Jay P. Greene (American Enterprise Institute) points out that supporters of SEL "are likely to fall far short if they fail to acknowledge the moral and religious roots of SEL, do not consider its history and how past efforts have managed to succeed, and attempt to reinvent those past efforts from scratch on a technocratic foundation that is at odds with what allows SEL to be effective." Previous *Washington Flyer* articles have covered some of the [weaknesses with the current SEL approach](#) to education, [noting](#) that "teaching good social-emotional habits without establishing a foundation of truth falls short of SEL's goal to teach the whole child."

AACS DC Office Welcomes Interns

The AACS Legislative Office in Washington, D.C., is pleased to welcome two interns for the summer internship program. Isabel Botero is studying political science at Pensacola Christian College, entering her junior year in the fall. Her goal through the internship is "to learn more about the lobbying process and how to be better involved in government." She also hopes "to learn skills that will help me with a future in politics." Hannah Bryan will be starting her senior year in the fall, also at Pensacola Christian College, with a major in professional writing and a minor in political science. She notes about the internship, "There are many opportunities available to stretch myself and go outside of my comfort zone as well as meet new people in different occupations." We are glad to have both Isabel and Hannah with us and pray the Lord will use this summer to open doors of opportunity for them to serve Him and our great country.

AACS Youth Legislative Training Conference

The AACS is looking forward to hosting the annual AACS Youth Legislative Training Conference next week, offering AACS students from across the country the opportunity to experience the political workings of Washington, D.C., from a biblical worldview. Please join us in praying for a profitable week with the students. We invite you to follow the activities of the week through Facebook (@AACSEducat) and Twitter (@AACS_DC).

In Case You Missed It:

**There will be no Washington Flyer next week so that staff may devote their time to the Youth Legislative Training Conference. The Flyer will resume on July 19. Please be in prayer for the staff, chaperones, and student attendees at the conference. We pray God works in their hearts and minds so that they will diligently seek Him and His will regarding how they may serve Him through service to their country.*

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