



A Publication of the American Association of Christian Schools

The Washington Flyer
May 22, 2020

*“The liberties of our country, the freedom of our civil constitution, are worth defending against all hazards:
And it is our duty to defend them against all attacks.”*
Samuel Adams

COVID Closures Affecting Private Schools

The economic hardships from the coronavirus shutdowns are beginning to affect private schools beyond the necessity of rapid transition to distance learning. Recent reports indicate that some private schools are closing their doors permanently due to the financial strain that the coronavirus closures have placed on already tight budgets. According to the CATO Institute, as of May 18, twenty-six private schools have closed, meaning that 5,217 students will be displaced in their education next fall. All but two of these schools are Catholic schools; and Kathy Mears, CEO of the Catholic Education Association, has indicated that there could be [close to 100 Catholic schools](#) that do not reopen in the fall. While many private schools are participating in the provisions in the CARES Act—providing for payroll and other extra educational costs incurred by their response to the pandemic—for some schools this has not been enough. Ms. Mears noted that for many Catholic schools the combination of job losses (which affected tuition payments), cancelled church services (which affected giving to the parish and, subsequently, the school), and cancellation of annual spring fundraisers devastated the budgets for the schools and led to the permanent closures. AACCS Legislative Director Jamison Coppola has noted that “while we have not heard that the declines in AACCS enrollments are causing school closures this year, all schools have had to tighten their budgets as they move through this time.” Recent information [published by EdChoice](#) shows that the cost to public schools would be significant if private school students were forced back into the public school system.

Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has indicated her desire to ensure that private education is supported through the pandemic and remains a viable option for parents. The Department of Education offered explicit guidance for including private schools in the equitable services provided for through the Education Stabilization Fund created by the CARES Act. With \$300 million of the discretionary funds allotted to her from the CARES Act, the Secretary has also created [two grant competitions](#), which she is using to encourage states to “rethink education to better match the realities of the 21st century.” The Rethink K–12 Education Models Grant program (\$180 million) encourages states to create innovative ways for students to access K–12 education, including microgrants for families to have the necessary access to technology for their educational needs. This has garnered criticism from [Democrats](#) and [teachers’ unions](#) who charge that the relief funds were intended for low-income families only, and including private schools in the relief funding is a misuse of funds and simply giving aid to the rich. Countering this charge, Neal McCluskey, director of the Center for Educational Freedom at the CATO Institute, pointed out that most [private schools charge much less](#) per student than their counterpart public schools, and many private schools serve low- and middle-income families.

North Carolina and Oregon Judges Rule to Open Churches

Judges in North Carolina and Oregon have moved to reopen churches amid growing public outcry that churches should be counted among essential businesses. In North Carolina, [Judge James Dever granted worshippers](#) at Berean Baptist Church and People’s Baptist Church a temporary restraining order against Governor Roy Cooper’s executive order that barred indoor religious gatherings while permitting various secular gatherings. According to the governor, a church gathering of more than ten people must be held outdoors “unless impossible,” a determination that a local sheriff had the authority to make. Judge Dever [noted](#), “That’s a remarkable answer in light of the Free Exercise Clause.” Judge Dever found that the executive order was not a “neutral or generally applicable law” but a substantial burden on worshippers’ free exercise rights, “forcing them to choose between obeying their faith or risking criminal prosecution.” In Oregon, [Judge Matthew Shirtcliff initially ruled](#) in favor of several churches that argued that Governor Kate Brown’s executive order limiting church gatherings to 25 people was unconstitutional. Judge Shirtcliff found that the order burdened religious freedom and exceeded a 28-day limit on the governor’s emergency powers. Later that same day, the Oregon Supreme Court [stepped in](#) and stayed Judge Shirtcliff’s ruling, reinforcing the stay-at-home order. While the initial ruling was a victory for churches, congregations must now wait for the state Supreme Court’s final ruling.

The 1619 Project to Rewrite History in Public Schools

Last summer, the *New York Times* unveiled an ambitious attempt to rewrite the history of America’s founding called the 1619 Project. Headed up by journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones, the 1619 Project [attempts to retell American history](#) through the lens of slavery, determining that the year 1619, when slaves first came to the New World, marked the real beginning of this nation. Since the 1619 Project began last August, many historians have spoken out about the inaccuracies of the project, noting in a [letter](#) to the *New York Times* that “the 1619 Project offers a historically limited view of slavery, especially since slavery was not just (or even exclusively) an American malady, and grew up in a larger context of forced labor and race.” Despite these objections, Hannah-Jones recently received a Pulitzer Prize for her work, which is now seeping into public schools across America. The Pulitzer Center has [successfully promoted](#) history curriculum based on the 1619 Project in all 50 states, leading over 3,500 classrooms and several large school systems in cities such as Chicago; Washington, D.C.; Buffalo, New York; Wilmington, Delaware; and Winston-Salem, North Carolina, to adopt a history built upon slavery. As a result, thousands of school children will begin their understanding of American history through the lens of Hannah-Jones’ assertion that “our democracy’s founding ideals were false when they were written.”

In Case You Missed It:

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

[AACS Resource Page to Help Christian Schools Responding to COVID Crisis](#)

[The Role of the church in Reopening Could Be Its Finest Hour](#)

[Department of Labor Strengthens Religious Liberty Protections for Faith-Based Organizations Partnering with the Government](#)