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“Liberty will not long survive the total extinction of morals.”
Samuel Adams

U.S. House of Representatives Takes Steps to Protect Parental Rights

The U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce passed [H.R. 5](#), a bill intended to empower parent involvement in their children’s education by protecting their right to access and receive information regarding curriculum and materials used in public schools. Called the “Parents’ Bill of Rights,” the [bill amends existing laws](#)—mainly the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)—to include language that states parents have the right to review school library books, school budgets, and curriculum. The bill also ensures parents have the right to speak at school board meetings, to meet with teachers at least twice a year, and to be informed about curriculum changes, violent activity at school, and changes to gifted and talented programs. Additionally, the bill requires schools to have parents’ consent for use of educational technology in the classroom and for any school medical examinations. The bill further states that any school that receives federal education funds must have parental consent before “changing a minor child’s gender markers, pronouns, or preferred name on any school form; or allowing the child to change the child’s sex-based accommodations, including locker rooms or bathrooms.” The bill passed the education committee on party lines (25-17) after 16 hours of debate over amendments to the bill. The bill will likely be voted on by the full House next week. Rep. Virginia Foxx (NC), who serves as the committee chair, [stated](#), “Parents nurture our future engineers, pilots, electricians, full time parents and, even, public-school employees. Unfortunately, their God-given right to make decisions for their children has been ignored, and at times, attacked. So, Republicans are taking a stand and advancing H.R. 5.” Lead sponsor of the bill Rep. Julia Letlow (LA) stated, “Now my colleagues on the other side of the aisle and some of their political allies have said that this (federal) bill is an attack on our hard-working teachers, that it will lead to Congress dictating curriculum to local schools, or telling librarians what they can and cannot have on their shelf. But in that argument, it’s very clear that their underlying message is that they don’t want schools to have to be accountable to parents.”

Historically, House bills H.R. 1 through H.R. 10 are used for the legislative priorities of the Speaker of the House and majority party. (In the last Congress under Democratic leadership, H.R. 5 was the [Equality Act](#).) The priority of H.R. 5 for the Republican majority in the House reflects their recognition of the ongoing battle across the country over parental rights in education. A recent [report](#) released by Parents Defending Education (PDE) shows that 5,904 public schools in 168 school districts have policies in place to allow school personnel to keep information from parents regarding students’ decisions to alter their gender status. According to the PDE report, this affects 3,268,752 children in 28 states and the District of Columbia. Several [state legislatures](#) are considering legislation that will protect and clarify parents’ rights in education. President Biden, however, recently [called efforts](#) in Florida to protect children from gender confusion “close to sinful.” In response, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, [tweeted](#), “It is not ‘sinful’ to prohibit the mutilation of minors.” Rep. Tim Walberg (MI), who is responsible for the H.R. 5 language that ensures parental consent before students can alter their gender status, stated during the committee debate over H.R. 5, “Parents have the right—no, they have the authority—to know when their children make major life changes.”

Biden Budget Proposes Universal Preschool

Last week, President Biden unveiled his [proposed budget for 2024](#), a \$6.9 trillion proposal that includes a \$90 billion request for educational programs. While it is unlikely that the budget proposal will gain the approval of the Republican-controlled House of Representatives, which controls appropriations for each year, the proposal does signal the President's priorities for the coming year. Included in the education portion of the budget are allotments for mental health, students with disabilities, full-service community schools, multilingual learners, and programs to address the teacher shortage and promote diversity in schools. A major priority for the education budget is a plan to provide free, universal preschool for four-year-old children through a federal-state partnership that would be administered jointly by the Departments of Education (DOE) and Health Human Services (HHS). Last year's budget proposed free universal preschool for all three- and four-year-old children; while there is a provision in this year's proposal for the four-year-old program to expand to three-year-olds, the Administration is hoping that [narrowing the focus](#) to just four-year-old children will get the program approved. According to the budget proposal, the estimated cost of the "childcare and preschool investments is \$600 billion over 10 years." Democrats have long supported government-funded universal preschool, claiming that it is necessary to improve the long-term academic success for children and to help parents return to the workforce. Conservatives, however, [do not agree](#), pointing to multiple studies that show that preschool does not necessarily give children an academic advantage and can actually cause behavioral and social issues for children who attend preschool too early.

ADF Asks Supreme Court to Intervene in Case to Protect Female Athletes

West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey and Alliance Defending Freedom [filed a motion](#) last Thursday asking the Supreme Court to reverse a lower court's ruling that blocked West Virginia's Save Women's Sports Act. The law, passed in 2021, protects West Virginia's female athletes from unfair competition against male athletes who claim to be female. After the legislation passed, ACLU filed the lawsuit on behalf of a then 11-year-old student who referred to himself as Becky and wanted to try out for both the track and cross-country teams at his school. Former West Virginia State University student and soccer player Lainey Armistead intervened in the lawsuit to ensure that "future generations of female athletes are not discriminated against but have access to the same equal athletic opportunities" that she enjoyed. This January, a federal district court ruled in favor of allowing West Virginia's Save Women's Sports Act to remain in effect; however, on appeal, the U.S. 4th Circuit Court of Appeals granted an injunction against the law. If the Supreme Court agrees to take up the case, *B.P.J. vs. West Virginia State Board of Education*, it will be the first time the Court hears a case regarding protection in women's sports. ADF Senior Counsel and Vice President of Appellate Advocacy John Bursch pointed out that the WV law allows women to "fairly compete in athletics" and this is "legal, logical, and longstanding." He continued, "We urge the Supreme Court to allow West Virginia to enforce the law, respect the will of the state's citizens, and preserve equal athletic opportunities for women and girls." A total of 18 states, including West Virginia, have passed legislation to protect female athletes from unfair competition.

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[Practical Legal Help for Christian Schools: ADF Ministry Alliance](#)

[Promise to America's Children](#)

[ADF Video: Respect for Marriage Act: What Church and Ministry Leaders Should Know](#)