



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Virginia's Transgender Student Proposed Rules Run Roughshod over Parental Rights and Christian Values

Arlington, Virginia – Pro-Family Women, an organization that promotes the values of faithful Catholic women in proclaiming the truth about human life and family, today warned against the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) proposed model policies and guidance regarding transgender students in Virginia's public schools. **"If these proposed policies and guidance go into effect, the state of Virginia will allow public school personnel across the state to keep parents in the dark about their child's transgender behavior while at school, if the child so requests. This is a direct affront to the right of Christian parents (and all parents) to direct the upbringing of their children in line with the principles of their faith,"** said Susan Muskett, President of Pro-Family Women. For Catholic parents, in addition to getting appropriate and compassionate care for their child, it is important to affirm the child's God-given biological sex.

The Virginia Department of Education has released for comment "[Model Policies](#) for the Treatment of Transgender Students in Virginia's Public Schools." All school boards are required to adopt policies consistent with the "Model Policies" as the bare minimum; school boards will only be free to adopt more extensive policies regarding transgender students. If adopted, the proposed model policies and guidance will apply to both elementary and secondary public schools in Virginia. VDOE is [taking comments](#) on the proposed model policies and guidance from January 4 thru February 3.

Among the proposed model policies and guidance offensive to Christians (and other people of faith) are the following:

Secret Subversion of Parental Rights by School Personnel. The proposed model policies and guidance emphasize the need for confidentiality regarding a student's transgender status, even to the extent of permitting school personnel not to inform the student's parents of their child's transgender behavior. Pursuant to VDOE's guidance regarding confidentiality, "if a student is not ready or able to safely share with their family about their transgender status, this should be respected. There are no regulations requiring school staff to notify a parent or guardian of a student's request to affirm their gender identity . . ." (p. 12). This applies to students as young as kindergarten. If a school decides to keep the parents in the dark, the school may affirm

the student's new gender identity through the use of a name and/or pronoun, and to allow the child access to bathrooms and locker rooms of the opposite sex, all without the parent(s)' knowledge.

Parents threatened with reports to Child Protective Services. VDOE's guidance regarding recognition of a student's gender identity should install fear in any parent who disagrees with their child's decision to transition to another gender -- the threat of a report to Child Protective Services with the full weight of the government potentially coming down against them, the parent. A parent who is not affirming and counsels their child according to their faith could potentially be the subject of such a report. VDOE's guidance states that "whenever school personnel *suspects* . . . that a student is . . . at *risk* of abuse or neglect by their parent due to their transgender identity, they should report those concerns to Child Protective Services immediately." (p. 13, emphasis added)

Schools will be at the mercy of a transgender child. Children will be the sole arbiters of their transgender status. VDOE's proposed model policies require no substantiating evidence of a child's gender identity. VDOE's guidance states that this should involve "more than a casual declaration of gender identity" but it does not "require any substantiating evidence nor any required minimum duration of expressed gender identity." (p. 12). If a confused child vacillates on their chosen gender over the course of their schooling, a school must likewise shift in accommodating the student regarding their chosen name/pronoun, and access to bathrooms and locker room facilities.

Note, in August 2020, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the right of a Virginia transgender student, born a girl, to use the boys bathrooms. The Gloucester County School Board has appealed the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court. This Fourth Circuit case, *Grimm v. Gloucester County School Board*, involves bathrooms, yet the proposed model policies and guidance apply to locker rooms and overnight field trips as well. The proposed model policies and guidance place the burden on students who want to protect their modesty and privacy to leave the locker room and seek private changing areas, or in the case of an overnight field trip, request a single-occupancy room. (pp. 16-17). Many Christian parents try to instill modesty in their children, yet these guidelines are a de facto undermining of that Christian virtue.

Teachers' authority will be undermined and they will be forced to violate their religious beliefs. Under the proposed model policies, "school staff shall, at the request of a student or parent, address the student using the asserted name and pronoun that correspond to their gender identity." Pursuant to the model policy and guidance, if a teacher does not use the name and/or pronoun for a child's new gender (even if the teacher does not do so because of their religious beliefs), it will be viewed as discrimination. VDOE's guidance states: "A school employee's intentional and persistent refusal to respect a student's asserted name and pronoun is considered discriminatory." (p. 12). This policy endangers the employment of Catholics and those of other faith commitments.

Last month, Governor Northam's wife, Pamela Northam, proudly said that the state of Virginia has been at the "epicenter of the fight for transgender student rights." Muskett calls on parents to take action: **"Virginia's Christian parents must speak up now to protect their responsibility before God to direct the upbringing of their children."**

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