

School transgender policy upsets group

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

A Christian advocacy group has asked a western New York school district to stop letting a transgender student use the boys' locker rooms and restrooms, saying it violates other students' privacy.

In a letter to Le Roy High School Principal Timothy McArdle, the Alliance Defending Freedom said the district's transgender policy also threatens student safety, parental authority, religious freedom and the learning environment.

"This practice has made multiple male students very uncomfortable and has caused them to modify their daily activities to try to avoid sharing private facilities with a classmate who is a biological female," according to the letter, which legal counsel Matt Sharp said was prompted by a parent's concern.

Neither McArdle nor Le Roy Superintendent Kim Cox immediately responded to requests for comment Monday.

Policies for transgender students are being debated at numerous districts around the country. Past court decisions have gone both ways.

In New York, state education officials issued guidance to districts in July. It said federal authorities have determined that barring students from restrooms that match their gender identity is prohibited under Title IX anti-discrimination law. "Alternative accommodations, such as a single 'unisex' bathroom or private changing space, should be made available to students who request them," the state said in its memo to districts, "but should never be forced upon students, nor presented as the only option."

But the Alliance Defending Freedom argued that Title IX regulations leave policy decisions to districts.

"Under no circumstances should schools operate under the mistaken belief that federal law requires them to treat sex as irrelevant to the restroom, shower, or locker room that students may access," according to the Oct. 30 letter.

The ADF recommended that Le Roy adopt the group's "model policy" of maintaining separate facilities while providing access to a single-stall bathroom or something similar to any student who desires privacy. The group offered legal assistance should such a policy be challenged in court.

"We're involved in several dozen school districts where we are helping out either the school district, the school board seeking more advice or parents wanting to provide information to school boards," Sharp said by phone.



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