



Southeastern Legal Foundation and Defense of Freedom Institute Celebrate OCR Recognizing Shawnee Mission SD “Gender Identity” Policies as Unlawful

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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[April 20, 2026] Today, Southeastern Legal Foundation (SLF) and the Defense of Freedom Institute for Policy Studies (DFI) celebrated the [recent announcement](#) from the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) declaring that the Shawnee Mission School District’s “gender identity” policies do not comply with federal law.

SLF and DFI previously released a [joint complaint](#) to OCR against the school district, challenging its unlawful policies which allowed students to access sex-separated facilities based on gender identity and enforced the use of preferred names and pronouns among students.

The complaint was filed on behalf of Kansas parents and their first-grade daughter who encountered a biological male identifying as a female in the girl’s restroom. As a result of the experience, the first grader has expressed significant emotional distress and has been forced to use staff bathrooms separate from the student bathrooms to protect her privacy.

SLF President Kim Hermann said, “I am incredibly thankful that OCR has recognized the absolute insanity of these ‘gender identity’ policies and how dangerous they are for students of Shawnee Mission SD. It’s a shame that this even had to happen and that a school district would ever allow this level of emotional distress and torment to occur to any students, let alone a first grade girl. The reality is that when you allow these forms of woke policies to infiltrate our school systems, students are the ones that pay the price.”

“The findings against the Shawnee Mission school district confirm that schools cannot allow gender theory to gut Title IX,” **said DFI President and Co-Founder Bob Eitel**. “We are grateful that the Department of Education moved quickly to protect women and girls.”

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The Defense of Freedom Institute for Policy Studies (“DFI”) is a national, nonprofit organization dedicated to defending and advancing freedom and opportunity for every American family, student, entrepreneur, and worker and to protecting the civil and constitutional rights of Americans at school and in the workplace. Such rights include the right not to be excluded from equal opportunities in federally funded education programs or activities due to prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex and the right of parents to inspect, review, and control access to the education records of their minor children.

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