

Opening Statement of Chairman Tim Walberg (R-MI)

Education and Workforce Committee

Breaking Trust: Attacks on Parental Rights, Inappropriate Content, and  
Legal Abuses in America's Schools

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(As prepared for delivery)

Across the country, school districts are losing sight of their core mission: educating students. When school policies affect the safety, privacy, and well-being of children, Congress has a responsibility to ask questions. When parents are excluded from major decisions involving their children, Congress has a responsibility to ask questions. And when classrooms become vehicles for political or ideological agendas rather than places of learning, Congress has a responsibility to ask questions.

This is exactly why we are here today. These witnesses were invited to explain policies in their district that sideline parents, compromise student privacy rights, and fuel radical ideology.

Many districts today teach a radical, unscientific vision of gender to extremely young children. By first grade, Chicago Public Schools introduces students to the concept of "gender identity." Third-grade material then asks students to "Explain the difference between sex

assigned at birth and gender identity.” By fifth grade, CPS introduces students to puberty blockers.

Many districts help students socially transition—meaning changing their name, their pronouns, and their restrooms and locker rooms. Even worse, schools do this without parental consent or knowledge.

Chicago’s policy even allows biological males, on a case-by-case basis, to sleep with biological females on overnight field trips. So does Loudoun County’s.

The consequences of these policies are horrific. In Loudoun County schools, a boy entered a women’s bathroom and sexually assaulted a 15-year-old girl. The boy was wearing a skirt, according to the survivor’s family, a claim that was not contested by the boy’s family. You might think that the school immediately called law enforcement and had the boy arrested. That’s not what happened. In fact, police were called for one person—Scott Smith, the survivor’s father who confronted school staff at the main office for not involving law enforcement.

This tragic story is the natural result of policies that fail to take gender seriously, that reject biological differences between men and women, and that are soft on student misconduct.

I want to be clear that these policies don’t make teachers the enemy. In some cases, teachers are also victims.

Radical gender policies can force teachers to violate their conscience and deny their faith in order to keep their job.

In May 2021, Tanner Cross, a Christian teacher at Loudoun County's Leesburg Elementary School, was placed on leave after speaking out against radical gender ideology in his personal capacity at a school board meeting.

Loudoun County could have changed its policy immediately to protect people of faith. It didn't. Instead, it doubled down, persecuted Mr. Cross for his faith, and spent years of taxpayer dollars defending their illegal position. That's not just unwise—it's immoral and intolerant. Religious liberty is one of the most fundamental rights guaranteed by our Constitution.

Trampling on religious liberty is nothing new for many school districts, unfortunately. In 2024, Chicago Public Schools demanded that Moody Bible Institute drop its Christian beliefs in order for its teaching candidates to gain experience in Chicago schools.

Chicago eventually dropped their demands after being hit with a lawsuit. That's no surprise. Chicago's position was unconstitutional—you don't have to renounce Christian beliefs to teach in a public school. But for Chicago Public Schools, that was a hill worth dying on.

In fact, many school districts seem to rebuke traditional values.

San Francisco and Chicago openly advertise abortion services for minor children. Chicago's website even reminds kids that "there is no parental notice requirement for minors accessing abortion" in the state. Chicago also requires condoms to be available to students 12 and up.

America's students deserve better. America's students need school leaders who have moral clarity about right and wrong and who aren't afraid to do the right thing even when it's unpopular. Schools need to stop playing politics, stop cutting out parents, and help students succeed. That's what today's hearing is about.