



CALIFORNIA

Murrieta school district mandates parental notification if child is transgender



Tracy Nusbaum, the mother of a transgender child, leaves the room after speaking at a Murrieta Valley school board meeting Thursday. (Gina Ferazzi / Los Angeles Times)



BY PRISCELLA VEGA

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The Murrieta Valley Unified School District on Thursday night approved a policy that requires staff to inform parents if a student is transgender or gender-nonconforming, becoming the second school district in the Inland Empire to do so.

The board passed the proposal 3-2 at the end of a long meeting Thursday, drawing cheers and applause from the dozens who had remained to hear the outcome. The board approved the proposal despite feedback from the district's retained attorney during the meeting warning members the new policy could put them on shaky legal ground.

The [proposal](#) was submitted by board President Paul F. Diffley III and clerk Nicolas Pardue. It included a [copy](#) of Chino Valley Unified School District's latest policy, which likewise requires staff to [notify parents if their child is gender-nonconforming](#) or transgender.

For nearly three hours Thursday, parents and students shared anecdotes — of children they knew who were transgender, of concerns about statistics on suicide rates. They held up signs that read “Protect Family Bonds”; others wore rainbow-themed attire. After the start of the meeting, state Supt. of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond emailed a letter to the board requesting the item be withdrawn, similar to the request he made of Chino Valley Unified.



Attendees in support of the parental notification policy hold up signs stating “Protect Family Values” during a Murrieta School Board meeting. (Gina Ferazzi/Los Angeles Times)

Supporters of the proposal contended that, if students experienced gender dysphoria, parents were best suited to offer them guidance. Some teachers expressed discomfort about withholding information from guardians; others feared that taking up this debate would only invite state officials to infringe on the board's local control. Opponents of the policy expressed concern for students whose only safe haven might be their campus.

Although the meeting remained relatively calm, trustee Linda Lunn reminded attendees to remain silent even if they disagreed with a speaker's opinion.



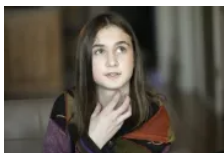
CALIFORNIA

LGBTQ+ students have become a political target. Know your rights in California

Aug. 10, 2023

“As a parent myself, I can't help but think how anti-family the current state guidance is,” said Jessica Tapia, a former high school teacher who [alleged the Jurupa Unified School District fired her](#) for refusing to comply with gender-affirming policies. “Parents are the greatest protectors,” said Tapia, who is suing the district in federal court.

“People don't choose to be transgender; they are transgender,” Marinna De Brauwere, who has had five children in the school district. “School may be the one and only affirming space for these transgender youth.”



WORLD & NATION

For transgender kids, a frantic rush for treatment amid bans

April 22, 2023

Murrieta Valley Unified is the latest Southern California school board to become part of the LGBTQ+ culture war. In addition to Chino Valley, where heated debate erupted over its new policy, the Temecula Valley Unified school board recently [rejected state-approved LGBTQ+](#)

[history lessons](#), describing materials as “pornographic” and “obscene.” The board [subsequently approved the materials](#) after a threat by Gov. Gavin Newsom to fine the district \$1.5 million.

School board President Diffley, in an interview before Thursday’s meeting, talked about what motivated him to make the proposal.



After a marathon meeting, youth pastor and parent Rachel Dennis leaves the Murrieta School Board meeting in frustration. (Gina Ferazzi/Los Angeles Times)

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“As a parent, I would want to know about everything that concerns my child’s mental health and physical health while they’re at school,” he said. “I don’t think there should be anything hidden because I have a fundamental right as a parent to bring up my child. ... If I can’t get all the information I need to have to have a reasonable discussion with my child, then the school is not doing its job.”

In an emailed statement, the state Department of Education stressed students’ “legally protected privacy interest under the California Constitution with respect to information about their gender identity.” The department’s director of communications, Maria Clayton, said, “It is critical that schools protect the well-being of students, including some of our most vulnerable students, transgender students.”



LIFESTYLE

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June 7, 2023

A spokesperson for California Atty. Gen. Rob Bonta declined to comment, pointing instead to the three-page letter Bonta wrote to Chino Valley Unified warning that its proposal could infringe on California’s antidiscrimination law, and a news release announcing the civil rights investigation into the district by Bonta’s office.

Chino Valley Unified garnered national attention in June when it proposed a set of controversial policies. The board voted in favor of limiting what flags could be displayed in classrooms, such as the United States and California flags. Rainbow flags, which signify support for LGBTQ+ rights, are not allowed.



CALIFORNIA

Temecula school district sued over its ban of critical race theory

Aug. 2, 2023

Chino Valley Unified's other proposal, which also won approval, requires staff to inform parents if a student wants to identify as another gender, go by a different name or use pronouns that do not match their assigned gender at birth. Staff must also notify parents if students try joining "sex-segregated school programs" that don't match their biological gender, including athletic teams, or attempt to use bathrooms assigned to genders that are different from their biological sex.

The new policies prompted the Associated Chino Teachers union to file an unfair practice charge against the district this week with the state Public Employment Relations Board. In a news release, the union said that the district didn't collectively bargain with them about the new policies and that one of those policies could improperly limit protected union speech.

"Unfortunately, our board is creating headlines by focusing on things that don't benefit students and that divide our community," union President Brenda Walker said in a statement. "We are working to have them rescind these harmful and divisive policies and to join us instead in focusing on things our union is fighting for, such as better support systems for special education students and recruiting and retaining quality educators for our community."

Chino's policy mirrors a failed bill that was proposed earlier this year by Assemblymember Bill Essayli (R-Corona). Assembly Bill 1314 would have required the state's school districts to inform parents if their child was gender-nonconforming or transgender.

Earlier this week, Essayli [addressed a letter](#) to Bonta questioning the legal basis of his civil rights investigation. "The department does not provide any statutory or court authority supporting its position," Essayli wrote. "Never in the history of our jurisprudence have we held that children have a right to privacy from their parents."

The heated debate surrounding LGBTQ+ issues has magnified the nation's political fractures. In the last election cycle, the state GOP pushed to [galvanize conservative new candidates](#) to run for local school boards, providing training and talking points through the program "[Parent Revolt](#)."



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Priscella Vega is a reporter for the Los Angeles Times, covering the Inland Empire. She previously reported on the 2022 congressional election, the drought's impact in San Joaquin Valley and breaking news. Before joining The Times, she worked for the Daily Pilot, the Daily Breeze and the Long Beach Press-Telegram. She earned her journalism degree from Cal State Long Beach and is a native Spanish speaker.

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