Church and State Moment: National controversy comes to Iowa schools

This Church and State Moment brings a national crisis close to home – first to Fairfield, Iowa, and most likely to everyone’s home town.

In May of 2016, President Obama issued a directive to public school districts and departments of education in regards to federal Title IX rules regarding transgender students. The administration threatened to remove Title IX funding from any school that does not comply and gave authority to the Department of Justice and Department of Education to ensure this directive is implemented.

Specifically, this directive insists transgender students be allowed to use the restrooms, locker rooms, and hotel rooms (on field trips) consistent with the gender with which “identify.” Under this directive, the school district may not require transgender students to use a single-stall, gender-neutral restroom, or separate hotel room, which had been practiced by some schools in Iowa. If the directive is followed, school districts must allow students use of whichever bathroom, locker room, or hotel room they choose – meaning boys can use the girls’ room, shower in the girls’
room, and sleep in the girls’ rooms, and vice versa.

In the past, many schools quietly handled the transgender issue by making separate, unisex, single-stall restrooms and showers available for anyone to use. That common sense solution has now been replaced with gender chaos.

In the small city of Fairfield, in southeast Iowa, chaos and division has entered their public high school. Upon the announcement of the new policy, students began to wear armbands symbolizing where they stood on the restrooms. The armbands have led to bullying and division among the student body. Female students have reported male students walking into the locker room while they were changing. One student was asked to remove his homemade Christian T-shirt, while many others report anxiety in using the restroom and waiting until after school to use them. This learning environment has now become chaotic.

In this hour of confusion and chaos, school districts across our state desperately need to hear the voice of reason from the church and from God.

Pastors and churches in Fairfield have joined together to be the voice of reason. They have approached their school board and superintendent to discuss ways to ensure the safety of all students, and to ensure that students will not be exposed to the nude body of a person of the opposite sex while using the restroom, locker room, or hotel room on a school trip.

These churches have stood up to protect the youth in Fairfield. Collectively they have gathered nearly 1,000 signatures and inspired over 100 people to attend school boards meetings to express concerns.

In this hour of confusion and chaos, school districts across our state desperately need to hear the voice of reason from the church and from God. Without the voice of the church, our
elected officials are forced to look to the humanist world on the important questions of sexuality, which loom doubly important during students’ vulnerable teenage years.

Thank you to the churches in Fairfield, Iowa, for standing for the family, protecting Iowa children, and offering guidance to your local school board. We encourage other churches across Iowa to join Fairfield churches in standing for Iowa families by being the voice of reason to your school board.