

# VANDERBILT DODGES A BULLET

An incident recently occurred at Vanderbilt University that merited our attention. The good news is that the president, Daniel Diermeier, put the fire out just before we decided to pounce. Just to make sure something like this doesn't happen again, Bill Donohue shared his concerns with the president.

The issued involved a very serious threat to the conscience rights of those who work at the Pediatric Transgender Clinic. Dr. Ellen Wright Clayton told staff members who invoke conscientious objections to performing sex-reassignment operations that they were out of line.

"If you are going to assert conscientious objection," she is said to have commented to staff members, "you have to realize that that is problematic."

She is also quoted as saying, "I just want you to take home that saying that you're not going to do something because of your conscientious—because of your religious beliefs, is not without consequences, and should not be without consequences." She then told them that "if you don't want to do this kind of work, don't work at Vanderbilt."

The statement that was subsequently released by Vanderbilt said, "Our policies allow employees to decline to participate in care they find morally objectionable, and do not permit discrimination against employees who choose to do so. This includes employees whose personal or religious beliefs do not support gender-affirming care for transgender persons."

Donohue was happy with the statement, but was still wary.

"My only concern is why Dr. Clayton would think that what she allegedly said could ever be seen as legal, never mind ethical. One would think that someone in her role as a health law expert would know better. I trust she has been told that

conscience rights are integral to religious liberty and must be protected.”

Interestingly, a few weeks later Vanderbilt announced that it was suspending gender-transition surgeries for minors following a backlash. We hope we had something to do with that.