

VIRGINIA SCHOOL BOARD REJECTS CLERGY BAN

When the Catholic League learned of some disturbing proposed changes to a sex education curriculum in Fairfax, Virginia, we wasted no time swinging into action. We won on what we considered to be the most pressing issue—a bid to silence the voice of the clergy. Here's what happened.

The Fairfax County school board voted June 14 on proposed changes to the sex education curriculum. Many of the revisions were deeply disturbing, both from a moral and a pedagogical perspective.

The Family Life Education Curriculum Advisory Committee was the body making the proposals. The list of changes read like a page out of the gay rights agenda, so thoroughly out of touch with reality were they. What bothered us most of all was the proposal to eliminate the clergy from the list of competent advisors to young persons who are confused about sexuality.

No reason was given why priests, ministers, rabbis, imams, and others, should be eliminated as a resource to students struggling with sexual issues. To make matters even more absurd, after recommending that the clergy be stricken from the list of advisors, the document prepared by the Advisory Committee said, "Emphasis will be placed on tolerance and nondiscrimination of all people."

Tolerance and nondiscrimination? What the Advisory Committee was proposing was intolerance and discrimination. Indeed, the proposal smacked of religious hostility, a scourge that the U.S. Supreme Court recently said (see the Masterpiece Cakeshop decision) was constitutionally prohibited.

Bill Donohue put this question to school authorities: "Is the Fairfax County school board prepared to spend large sums of

money on a lawsuit challenging its discriminatory initiative?" Evidently, they got his message: The proposal to ban the clergy from counseling young people beset with sexual problems was unanimously voted down.

On other matters, the proposals passed.

The Advisory Committee set anchor with the gay rights agenda by denying human nature. It said individual identity will be described as "sex assigned at birth, gender identity (includes transgender), gender role, and sexual orientation (includes heterosexual, bisexual, and homosexual)."

"The first two identities constitute pedagogical nonsense," Donohue said. "Sex is not assigned—it is determined by the father. Gender identity is a misleading term: boys who think they are girls, and girls who think they are boys, deserve to be treated for their mental disorder, not pandered to by school officials."

Prior to the revisions, students in the Fairfax County school district learned that abstinence was the one and only 100 percent effective method of preventing sexually transmitted diseases. This was changed to say abstinence is the "most effective" method. Yet there was no new scientific research that merited the change. Indeed, it was being done for purely ideological reasons: to conform to the gay agenda, the Advisory Committee sought to include drugs alongside abstinence.

For example, a drug is available to those who are HIV-negative but who have a relatively high risk of contracting HIV. It is called pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP. One of the proposals, which passed, sought to teach students about this option.

"This is irresponsible," Donohue said. "Schools should not be in the business of pushing drugs on sexually reckless students—they should be promoting counseling, with an eye

towards abstinence. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that 'Anal sex is the highest-risk sexual behavior for HIV transmission.' Moreover, just last month, the CDC found that 70 percent of new HIV infections are among gay and bisexual men, the riskiest sexual practice being anal sex."

Donohue asked, "Why is there no mention of the dangers of anal sex in this document? Students are told to stop smoking, are they not? They are not told to try electronic cigarettes. Why is the Advisory Committee dodging its responsibility? The answer is obvious: the members do not want to depart from the gay agenda."

We did not get all that we wanted, but we did succeed in securing rights for the clergy. Without that victory, there would be nothing stopping gay rights activists from taking over the school district, setting the stage for similar outcomes in other parts of the country.