



State of West Virginia
Office of the Attorney General
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April 1, 2026

The Honorable Pamela Bondi
Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20530

Submitted via email

Re: Concerns of States of West Virginia, Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Utah about Federal Funding of Gender Identity-Biased State Judicial Trainings and Resources

Dear Attorney General Bondi:

We write to express our concern that the United States Department of Justice has—likely unknowingly—funded gender ideology-biased judicial trainings and resources that have slanted our state family court systems. Our States are responsible for promoting the peace, comfort, and convenience of our citizens. But, when liberal groups prime courts to destroy the traditional family—the foundation of our society—we are hampered in that mission. We seek the DOJ’s cooperation in ensuring that federal funds are not used to bias state court judges presiding over domestic and family relations proceedings, to the detriment of parental and religious rights.

Federally-Funded Gender Advocacy Groups Skew State Judicial Systems

It’s no secret that Americans are engulfed in a tug-of-war over the definition of “sex.”¹ Thanks to the proliferation of radical gender theory, some parents now face a choice. They can either blindly accept and affirm claims of their child’s newfound gender or keep their child firmly rooted in truth, and for many, religious doctrine.

¹ See Kim Parker, Juliana M. Horowitz & Anna Brown, *Americans’ Complex Views on Gender Identity and Transgender Issues*, PEW RSCH. CTR. (June 28, 2022), <https://tinyurl.com/4ajnyawe>.

If all that isn't enough for parents to carry, now liberal advocacy groups are teaching judges to punish parents if they choose the “non-woke” path. And those groups are using DOJ funds to accomplish this goal.

Advocacy organizations have long sought to supply judges with “legal theories and relevant data needed to make decisions” on hot-button topics like LGBTQ+ legal issues.² Advocacy organizations providing trainings on LGBTQ+ issues largely focus on equal treatment, pronouns, and LGBTQ+ awareness in the court system.

For example, last November, The National Judicial College's Appellate Judges Education Institute Summit included a plenary session titled “R.E.S.P.E.C.T – LGBTQ Inclusion in the Courtroom and Workplace.”³ The session's stated purposes included helping judges understand gender ideology terminology and adopt pronoun usage. The three panelists included a woman who identifies as a man, a male attorney who identifies as female, and the first LGBTQ+ justice on the Minnesota Supreme Court. Many State court judges attend the AJEI conference each year, and The National Judicial College is supported, in part, by DOJ.⁴

Those general training courses are problematic enough. But a growing streak of trainings and resources go a step further—baking preferential treatment for parents who embrace gender ideology into state domestic relations proceedings. The Legal Aid Society's LGBT Law and Policy Initiative—a DOJ-funded organization⁵—trained New York family court judges to “expand[] ideas of what is in the best interest of children.”⁶ The judges considered a scenario where a biological boy wanted hormone blockers, feminine dress at school, and to change his name.⁷ One separated parent simply wanted the child to wait until he was older to make those decisions. The other parent moved the court for physical custody and an order to condition visitation on allowing the adolescent to undergo gender therapy. The attorney-trainers instructed the judges to favor the gender identity-encouraging parent, guardians ad litem, and forensic experts as part of its “best interest” analysis.⁸ The lesson: side against parents who affirm biological reality.

² See, e.g., *Judicial Education*, WILLIAMS INST., <https://tinyurl.com/4kdkvh74> (last visited Mar. 24, 2026). “The information provided to judges and court officials remains the key source of education” about such issues. Sarah McConnell, *Educating Judges & Advancing Inclusion: The Evolution of Gendered Language in U.S. Courts*, 29 ROGER WILLIAMS U. L. REV. 86, 100 (2023).

³ *Plenary 3: R.E.S.P.E.C.T – LGBTQ Inclusion in the Courtroom and Workplace*, NAT'L JUD. COLL., <https://tinyurl.com/37d66her> (last visited Mar. 24, 2026).

⁴ NAT'L JUD. COLL., ANNUAL REPORT TO STAKEHOLDERS, 2024, 21 (2025), <https://tinyurl.com/2kt4xfrv>.

⁵ See *FY 2017 OVW Grant Awards by State*, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST., <https://tinyurl.com/ymxyvxyx> (last visited Mar. 24, 2026); *FY 2024 OVW Grant Awards by State*, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST., <https://tinyurl.com/h969y57a> (last visited Mar. 24, 2026).

⁶ Hon. Paula J. Hepner, Judge (Ret.), N.Y. State Jud. Inst., *Transgender Litigants in the Court System: Providing Equal Access and Impartial Justice – Part Two* 34 (Oct. 25, 2013), <https://tinyurl.com/29p9y29s>; see also HON. PAULA J. HEPNER & KIMBERLY FORTE, N.Y. STATE JUD. INST., *SERVING TRANSGENDER LITIGANTS 1*, <https://tinyurl.com/33dp4e3j> (last visited Mar. 24, 2026).

⁷ *Transgender Litigants in the Court System*, *supra* note 6, at 46-48.

⁸ *Id.* at 48-62.

And indoctrination isn't limited to an hour- or even days-long presentation. Advocacy groups send home resources for judges to reference later—and often.⁹ Most problematic among these resources are bench cards, flash cards kept on the judge's desk to help with quick decision making.

In 2017, several national organizations developed a bench card that puts a thumb on the scale for adherents to gender theory, particularly in domestic-relations and juvenile-justice cases.¹⁰ Another DOJ funded resource¹¹—the card tells judges to order gender-skeptical parents into counseling, framing their beliefs as a “barrier to family reunification.”

Several courts already use similar bench cards. Oregon adopted a bench card requiring biology-affirming parents “to participate in counseling and parent support groups” before family reunification.¹² California adopted similar bench cards instructing judges to “[o]rder participation in outpatient counseling” to “reduc[e] conflict around custody and visitation issues, and improving parenting skills.”¹³

Altogether, these advocacy groups' goal is clear: encourage courts to “award custody to the parent who supports the child's gender identity exploration.”¹⁴ Their efforts are bearing fruit, too. “Courts tend to award custody of gender expansive teenagers to their affirming parent.”¹⁵ Courts even produce “disjointed results” when it comes to pre-adolescent children.¹⁶ And these gender-related judicial training efforts are only expanding.¹⁷

In short, the courts are stacked against parents and others who reject gender ideology—we must act now. After all, the problem is widespread—and the instances we cite here are just a few examples, reflecting the trainings and resources we could readily find online. We suspect many more exist—not all judicial trainings are published publicly, so the full scope of this problem may

⁹ See, e.g., TODD BROWER, WILLIAMS INST., SUPREME COURT OF NEVADA: TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NONBINARY PEOPLE IN THE NEVADA COURTS: PRACTICAL TOOLS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR NEVADA JUDGES (2023), <https://bit.ly/4IP9uwE> (including the SOGIE Bench Card in reference materials).

¹⁰ NCJFCJ ET AL., ACCESS TO JUVENILE JUSTICE IRRESPECTIVE OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY, AND GENDER EXPRESSION (SOGIE) (2017), <https://bit.ly/3NCdm7A> [*Bench Card*].

¹¹ *Id.*; see also NCJFCJ, IMPLEMENTATION SITES PROJECT (2019), <https://tinyurl.com/4ahywt2n>; *FY 2017 OVW Grant Awards by State*, *supra* note 5.

¹² OR. JUD. DEP'T, SUPPORTING PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS FOR LGBTQIA2S PERSONS IN YOUR COURTROOM: A GUIDE FOR OREGON JUDGES (2018), <https://bit.ly/4bv9tKH>.

¹³ JUD. COUNCIL OF CAL., JUDICIAL BENCH CARD SERIES: SUPPORTING THE MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING OF COURT-INVOLVED YOUTH (2023), <https://bit.ly/4rTTw5N>; see also JUD. COUNCIL OF CAL., BENCH REFERENCE GUIDE: WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, QUESTIONING (LGBTQ) YOUTH IN JUVENILE COURT? (2011), <https://bit.ly/3Pw9Pbo> (directing courts to encourage parents to get counseling related to LGBTQ+ youth).

¹⁴ See, e.g., Marie-Amélie George, *Exploring Identity*, 55 FAM. L.Q. 1, 9 (2021); Jessica Feinberg, *The Identity Factor*, 96 U. COLO. L. REV. 955, 996-1003 (2025).

¹⁵ George, *supra*, at 26.

¹⁶ *Id.* at 28.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Amanda Vinicky, *Advocates Seek Mandatory Training for Illinois Judges, Attorneys on Legal Needs of LGBTQ+ People*, WTTW (Sept. 7, 2024, 3:22 p.m.), <https://tinyurl.com/32suu2t6>.

be considerably larger than what we document here. Only DOJ has the means to explore the full scope of the problem.

Biased Judging Undermines Constitutional Rights

This letter is part of a sustained effort by our offices to root out biased judging in all its forms. We have led and signed on to similar multistate coalition letters raising parallel concerns about the integrity of judicial education and training materials.¹⁸ Impartiality is a cornerstone of our judicial system—no litigant, whatever the controversy, should face a judge pre-primed by advocacy-driven training materials funded by the federal government. We are committed to continuing that fight.

Like we've said before, funding biased trainings and resources like those described above is problematic for a host of reasons.

First, biased judging is anathema to due process and our entire judicial system. A judge may not give preferential treatment to any litigant—especially on a divisive political issue as gender identity ideology. Litigants have “the right to have an impartial judge.”¹⁹ Partiality is especially pernicious when it effectively imposes an “ideological discipline.”²⁰ Trainings that poison judges against certain parents based on gender ideology do just that.

Second, few liberties run deeper in the American tradition than a parent's right to guide the upbringing of their own children. Mothers and fathers—not the government—hold the “fundamental constitutional right to make decisions concerning the rearing of [their children].”²¹ It is “perhaps the oldest of the fundamental liberty interests recognized” in this nation.²² Yet these bench cards and trainings gut that conviction. Judges override parents on everything from their child's clothing to puberty blockers—all under the banner of “best interest.” What properly belongs to the family hearth, these trainings serve to the courtroom bench.

Third, and equally fundamental in our republic, is the First Amendment's command that government not bar the free exercise of religion.²³ “Many Americans ... believe that biological sex reflects divine creation, that sex and gender are inseparable, and that children should be encouraged to accept their sex and to live accordingly.”²⁴ The faiths that share these beliefs span the American religious landscape: Muslims, Catholics, Latter-day Saints, Evangelicals, Baptists,

¹⁸ See, e.g., Letter from Attorneys General to Hon. Robin L. Rosenberg, Dir., Fed. Jud. Ctr. (Jan. 29, 2026), <https://ago.wv.gov/media/37684/download?inline> (leading a 27-state coalition calling on the Federal Judicial Center to withdraw a newly added climate science chapter from its Reference Manual on Scientific Evidence, which placed a thumb on the scale in climate litigation); Letter from Attorneys General to Hon. Lee M. Zeldin, Adm'r, U.S. Env't Prot. Agency (Aug. 26, 2025), <https://ago.wv.gov/media/37549/download?inline>.

¹⁹ *Tumey v. Ohio*, 273 U.S. 510, 535 (1927).

²⁰ See, e.g., *W. Va. State Bd. of Educ. v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624, 637 (1943).

²¹ *Troxel v. Granville*, 530 U.S. 57, 70 (2000) (plurality opinion).

²² *Id.* at 65.

²³ U.S. CONST. amend. I.

²⁴ *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, 606 U.S. 522, 552 (2025).

and Jews.²⁵ Yet, these trainings and materials “recast millennia-old religious teachings about the inseparability of sex and gender as akin to racism and their adherents as bigots.”²⁶ Courts trained to see faith as bigotry will not give it due consideration. The system then operates as “[a]n odious exclusion from [the] benefits common” to parents who do not hold these religious beliefs.²⁷

For years, federal grants have quietly funded training materials that sculpt state judicial considerations—entrenching gender ideology into “best interest” analyses. This administration can end that practice—withdraw and deny future funding—and restore the constitutional boundary these grants eroded.

Request for Cooperation

We urge DOJ to place the family at the forefront of its considerations when making grants and similar funding decisions. Federal resources should not be used to destroy the basic unit of our societies. When the family is divided, our States and the entire country feel the repercussions for generations to come. Skewing state judicial systems in favor of some parents over others based on their gender identity beliefs does just that. We look forward to further collaboration with the DOJ to preserve and protect our States’ families and judicial integrity.

Sincerely,



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²⁵ See *id.*; *Brief of Amici Curiae Religious Freedom Institute’s Islam & Religious Freedom Action Team and Islamic Scholars in Support of Employers* at 12-13, *Bostock v. Clayton Cnty.*, 590 U.S. 644 (2020) (No. 17-1618); *Brief of Amicus Curiae United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in Support of Petitioners* at 1, 24-26, *West Virginia v. B.P.J.*, No. 24-43 (U.S. Sept. 18, 2025); *Brief of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*; *National Association of Evangelicals*; *Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention*; *Coalition for Jewish Values*; and *Jewish Coalition for Religious Liberty as Amici Curiae Supporting Petitioners* at 1, *Little v. Hecox*, No. 24-38 (U.S. Sept. 19, 2025).

²⁶ *Brief of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*; *National Association of Evangelicals*; *Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention*; *Coalition for Jewish Values*; and *Jewish Coalition for Religious Liberty as Amici Curiae Supporting Petitioners* at 2, *Little v. Hecox*, No. 24-38 (U.S. Sept. 19, 2025).

²⁷ *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia, Inc. v. Comer*, 582 U.S. 449, 467 (2017) (citation omitted).



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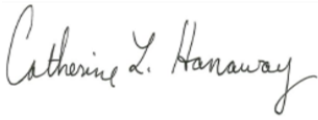
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