



The Satanic Temple Threatens Legal Action if School District Hits Children

Temple warns Cassville, MO School District corporal punishment violates their members' rights.

Salem, Massachusetts: In response to the Cassville R-IV School District's decision to reinstate corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure, The Satanic Temple's Protect Children Project has sent a letter to the superintendent and district school board informing them that student members of The Satanic Temple (TST) are exempt from this form of punishment. The Satanic Temple claims that physical violence by government officials violates their member's civil rights.

In August 2022, Cassville R-IV School District conducted a survey in which Superintendent Dr. Merlyn Johnson stated that several parents requested punishment be used in school. "One of the suggestions that came out was concerns about student discipline," noted Johnson, "so, we reacted by implementing several different strategies, corporal punishment being one of them."

This announcement drew the attention of the Protect Children Project – The Satanic Temple's campaign that addresses physical and psychological abuse that occurs routinely in U.S. public schools, according to the Department of Education. The Protect Children Project works to ensure TST members claim religious exemption from egregious forms of mistreatment in school, including corporal punishment, seclusion and restraint, and denial of bathroom access. TST asserts that abusive discipline violates its members' religious belief in bodily autonomy, asserted in The Satanic Temple's Third Tenet and, therefore, student members' civil rights.

The Satanic Temple not only considers corporal punishment to be an unethical violation of its religious beliefs but also an irrational and ineffective policy. "Numerous scientific studies show that corporal punishment not only harms children mentally, emotionally, and physically but also does not instill the intended effect on academic performance and behavior," noted TST co-founder Malcolm Jarry. "Students who are subjected to violence masquerading as discipline typically experience adverse consequences, and the psychological scars rarely heal."

Protect Children Project's Campaign Director, Eliphaz Costus, sent a certified letter to Superintendent Johnson and the Cassville District School Board, officially putting them on notice. "The Satanic Temple is taking preemptive action to ensure that our student members in Cassville are protected from abusive practices that violate their religious beliefs and civil rights," states Costus. "Now that the school district has been made aware, students who disclose their religious affiliation with TST are exempt from corporal punishment. To ignore this will open the door to civil and possibly criminal liabilities."

Costus added, "We have been contacting school districts all over the country regarding the rights of our student members. If you are a TST member experiencing physical or psychological abuse in school or simply want to take preemptive action, contact us at pcp@thesatanictemple.com, and we will put your school district on notice."

About The Satanic Temple

The mission of The Satanic Temple is to encourage benevolence and empathy among all people, reject tyrannical authority, advocate practical common sense and justice, and be directed by the human conscience to undertake noble pursuits guided by the individual will.