

Bozeman High students challenge Christian FCA club for not being inclusive

Bozeman Daily Chronicle by Larisa Casillas Wednesday, November 13th 2019

<https://nbcmontana.com/news/local/bozeman-high-students-challenge-christian-fca-club-for-not-bring-inclusive?fbclid=IwAR10i10Gu2gP99bJ40Z1qUa1CqRVLP7G9n9ONuuuK5rRf8fKRSQBJ0ra UE>

(See LINK to hear these girls YouTube – NOTE that two of them are daughters -15 and 17 - of Sara Callow, a Political Science Professor at MSU)



BOZEMAN, Mont. — At Bozeman High, a group of girls are challenging the local Fellowship of Christian Athletes Club saying their beliefs are potentially discriminating to students.

Seven months ago, Bozeman High School friends Maggie Callow, Katherine Callow, Esmie Hurd and Kate Bick brought forth concerns of possible discrimination to the high school administration over the school's Fellowship of Christian Athletes Club.

"Not that any of us have a problem with a Christian athletes club on campus -- we all think it's a good idea for kids to meet on those grounds -- just their connection to the national organization was something that concerned us," said Hurd.

That's because of the FCA's Statement of Faith published on their web page, which reads: "God instituted marriage between one man and one woman as the foundation of the family and the basic structure of human society. For this reason, we believe that marriage is exclusively the union of one man and one woman."

The girls also opposed the FCA's sexual purity pledge, which requires students to be abstinent before marriage and not have homosexual relations.

The school district found the local club did not have any instances of discrimination against LGBTQ students, but it did see a problem with the umbrella organization's published Statement of Faith.

"Young adulthood is a time when you have a lot of questions about yourself, and it's not the school district's place to judge one way or the other, because right or wrong isn't the issue," said Bozeman Schools Superintendent Bob Connors.

"We want to make sure it's an inclusive place where every student is treated the same and has the same access to any club or activity, and so the inclusion factor is very important to us," he added.

The school district gave the Bozeman High FCA two options -- disassociate from the national organization, change their name and follow the school district's policy on inclusion or remain with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes but no longer be recognized as a school club.

But the girls say it's not enough. On Monday they spoke before the school board, saying the administration took too long to handle their complaint.

They weren't allowed to speak directly with the club adviser and gave statistics on how LGBTQ students have a higher suicide rate than their peers.

"I think we aren't completely satisfied with the outcome if it just ends up being that they're just an unofficial school club, mostly because it doesn't really address our [first](#) concern, which is that students in our school might feel unwelcome by the organization's values that it has on its website," said Katherine Callow.

The FCA's state director, Bob Veroulis, says they don't discriminate -- anyone is welcome to attend their huddles -- their rules, however, do apply to adult leaders within the FCA.

"They are seeking legal counsel tomorrow morning, and they will then take their course of action to protect their rights to be considered first-class students just like the four ladies who are presenting their case," said Veroulis.

But the girls say it shouldn't be so complicated.

"If they really aren't discriminating, then they probably shouldn't have a problem publishing a statement of inclusion," said Maggie Callow.

The school district says they have yet to receive an answer from the FCA club about what they plan to do.

Attempts to reach their club adviser were not successful Wednesday