



MEDIA RELEASE

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PARENTS SUE MAUI PREPARATORY ACADEMY OVER DISCRIMINATORY POLICY TARGETING TRANS STUDENTS

HONOLULU, HAWAII – Today, the American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i ("ACLU of Hawai'i") filed a lawsuit on behalf of a family challenging Maui Preparatory Academy's ("Maui Prep") discriminatory policy targeting transgender students. Under Maui Prep's new policy, transgender students are no longer allowed to use facilities, play on sports teams, or room with students of the same gender. The lawsuit argues that the school violated Hawai'i anti-discrimination law and engaged in unfair and deceptive practices by implementing the policy.

Jane Poe, the Plaintiff in the case, is a nine-year-old transgender student who has lived openly as a girl since age five, with support from her family and school staff. Jane attended Maui Prep from the time she enrolled in preschool through third grade, after which the family was forced to withdraw their daughter rather than subject her to daily humiliation and stigma under the new policy.

Jane's parents, speaking anonymously, said: "For six years, we believed we were part of a true community where our child was safe, supported, and loved. To now watch our school carry on as though our family was never part of its story is profoundly painful. The love and belonging our family once trusted were taken away by the very school that nurtured them. What hurts most is knowing that the values of aloha and acceptance we once held so dearly extend to everyone but our child."

The lawsuit argues that the policy violates HRS § 368D-1, which prohibits schools receiving state funds from discriminating on the basis of gender identity or expression.

The Hawai‘i Legislature passed the law in 2018, in response to the Trump Administration’s rollback of Title IX protections for transgender students.

The lawsuit also claims that Maui Prep engaged in unfair and deceptive business practices by using its commitment to “Live Aloha” and its being “rooted in Hawaiian values” to sell families an image of acceptance and inclusion, even as it excluded transgender students.

Before filing the lawsuit, the ACLU of Hawai‘i sent Maui Prep a demand letter explaining how the school’s policy violated state law and urging the school to rescind it. The school’s initial response did not say whether it would modify the policy, so the ACLU of Hawai‘i sent a follow-up letter, which the school ignored.

ACLU of Hawai‘i Senior Staff Attorney, Emily Hills, said: “Hawai‘i law is clear: schools that accept state funds cannot discriminate against transgender students. Maui Prep was told repeatedly that its policy was illegal, and it chose to press forward anyway. That’s why this lawsuit is necessary—to enforce the law and protect all students from unlawful discrimination.”

Among the lawsuit’s allegations is that, before Maui Prep announced the policy, it quietly removed “gender identity and expression” from the non-discrimination policy published on its website, paving the way for the school to start discriminating against transgender students. The lawsuit also alleges Board president Tim Hehemann called transgender students the result of “bad parenting,” likening them to students “with repeated disciplinary violations” and “violent psychological issues.”

ACLU of Hawai‘i Legal Director, Wookie Kim, said: “The school’s stance has no place here. Hawai‘i has a long history of embracing gender-diverse people. By excluding transgender students while claiming to ‘live aloha,’ Maui Prep is misusing Hawaiian values to create the false appearance of inclusivity.”

The lawsuit also alleges Maui Prep tried to keep the policy secret and unwritten. Specifically, the head of school, Dr. Miguel Solis, tried to get Jane’s family to disenroll voluntarily to avoid disclosing the policy to the rest of the Maui Prep community. After news of the policy leaked in December 2024, faculty, staff, and families were extremely upset. Maui Prep later terminated the teacher who notified faculty and staff about the policy, and teachers who wore LGBTQ+ support pins that stated, “You are safe with me,” were threatened with discipline.

ACLU of Hawai‘i Executive Director, Salmah Rizvi, said: “When schools try to control or confine a student’s identity, they deny young people the freedom to grow into their fullest selves. Our values call us to honor every child’s dignity, creativity, and precious spirit—regardless of personal viewpoints. No institution should force students into narrow boxes that stifle who they are meant to be. And at the ACLU of Hawai‘i, we are deeply committed to building a society in which the civil liberties of all are protected.”

Along with other relief, the lawsuit asks the court to issue an injunction that requires Maui Prep to rescind the policy and requires board members and administrators to participate in an educational program about non-discrimination and inclusivity for transgender students.

Read the lawsuit here: [Maui Prep Complaint](#)

Read the demand letter here: [Maui Prep Demand Letter](#)

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The mission of the ACLU of Hawai‘i is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the U.S. and Hawai‘i constitutions. The ACLU of Hawai‘i fulfills this through legislative, litigation, and public education programs statewide. The ACLU of Hawai‘i is a non-partisan and private non-profit organization that provides its services at no cost to the public and does not accept government funds. The ACLU of Hawai‘i has been serving Hawai‘i for 60 years.