

Jenner & Block, Lambda Legal, and ACLU of Iowa Challenge Law Targeting LGBTQ+ Youth

News

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In partnership with Lambda Legal and the ACLU of Iowa, Jenner & Block filed a lawsuit to block SF 496, a sweeping new law that went into effect this fall in Iowa with wide-ranging implications for LGBTQ+ students' academic experience, safe school climate, and mental health. The law targets LGBTQ+ youth and requires school districts to ban books.

The law forbids any program, curriculum, promotion, or instruction relating to gender identity or sexual orientation in grades K-6, bans books with LGBTQ+ or sexual content with an explicit exception for the Bible, and requires teachers, counselors, school psychologists, and other staff to report students to their parents or guardians if a student asks to be referred to by names or pronouns that align with their gender identity. Penalties for violating portions of the law start January 1, 2024, and administrators, teachers, librarians, and other school staff will be subject to disciplinary action, which could include being fired or losing a license. Hundreds of titles have already been removed from school libraries, and school districts have taken down safe space stickers and removed references to LGBTQ historical figures from library displays. The law also has forced student groups for LGBTQ+ students and their allies to stop meeting.

The lawsuit was filed on behalf of eight Iowa students and their families affected by the law, and Iowa Safe Schools, a non-profit organization supporting LGBTQ and allied youth.

The Jenner team includes Partner Laurie Edelstein, Associates Daniel Echeverri, Anna Lyons, Effiong Dampha, Kate Mather, and Joshua Armstrong, and Paralegal Evan Harrington.

Related Attorneys



Laurie Edelstein

Partner

ledelstein@jenner.com

+1 415 293 5943

Anna K. Lyons

Associate

alyons@jenner.com

+1 213 239 2281



Effiong Dampha

Associate

edampha@jenner.com

+1 213 239 2247



Kate Mather

Associate

kmather@jenner.com

+1 415 293 5902

Joshua Armstrong

Associate

jarmstrong@jenner.com

+1 202 637 6310

Related Locations

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