



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on July 9, 2025

Parents Sue School for Treating Daughter as a Boy Despite Their Objections

A Texas couple is suing the Houston Independent School District ([HISD](#)) after teachers repeatedly and secretly referred to their daughter by a male name and pronouns over their clearly expressed objections.

Represented by the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), Christian parents Sarah and Terry Osborn filed a [lawsuit](#) in federal district court on June 23 seeking an injunction prohibiting HISD from continuing to treat their daughter as a boy.

The lawsuit declares:

The Osborns want to help their daughter in the way they think best. But the actions of HISD and its employees are preventing them from doing that. And HISD's responses to the Osborns make clear that those actions will continue — unless this Court says enough is enough.



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Pronoun Showdown

The Osborns first became aware that their daughter, referred to as Jane Doe in the complaint, was being called by a male name and pronouns in 2022, during her freshman year at Bellaire High School. At the beginning of the year, her theater teacher sent home a form requesting, among other things, the pronouns Jane would like her to use when referring to her. Sarah Osborn wrote “she” and “her.” (She later discovered that Jane had replaced those with “he/him” and told Jane to restore the feminine pronouns.) When the Osborns met the teacher at an open house, they instructed her to use Jane’s given name and female pronouns. The teacher agreed to do so but, in fact, “continued to use a masculine name and male pronouns to refer to Jane without telling the Osborns or seeking their consent,” says the suit.

The next year, the Osborns, via Jane’s schoolwork, discovered that at least four of her teachers, including her theater teacher, were calling her by a masculine name and pronouns. “On one of the worksheets,” they allege, “the teacher had crossed Jane’s name out in red ink and written the masculine name next to it.” They later contacted the teachers and expressed their desire that teachers would call Jane by her given name and female pronouns. One teacher specifically stated that he would comply with the Osborns’ request.

However, when those same teachers later provided assessments to the school guidance counselor regarding accommodations for Jane’s attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), they either avoided using Jane’s first name or pronouns or, in the case of the theater teacher, used her given name but the pronoun “they.”



Principal With No Interest

By this time, Jane had begun seeing a therapist about her gender struggle. According to the complaint, “The Osborns intentionally chose to work with a therapist who focused on possible root causes of the gender discomfort rather than one who would endorse or encourage the use of a masculine name and male pronouns.” The therapist strongly opposed the school’s treatment of Jane, arguing that it was “detrimental to her physical and emotional well-being” and “negatively impacting her continuing care.”

The following school year, teachers were still treating Jane as a boy, so the Osborns arranged to meet with the school principal, Michael Niggli. During the meeting, they explained their position, including the fact that it was grounded in their faith, but Niggli remained noncommittal about whether the school would abide by their wishes. The Osborns also sent a follow-up email reiterating their demands.

They later sought documents from Niggli on the teachers who were treating Jane as a boy. Niggli responded that the guidance counselor had communicated their instructions to teachers, but he would not assure them that he would enforce compliance with those instructions. He did not provide any documents.

The Osborns then [escalated](#) the matter to HISD by filing a document request with the district. The lawsuit states that, among the “three responsive documents” HISD provided, one was an email indicating that “at least some HISD employees continued to call Jane the masculine name even after the Osborns met with” Niggli. HISD’s response to a second request was first to state that it had over 18,000 responsive documents, and later to close the request with the explanation that it had none.

Non-assurance Policy

Further communications with HISD and the school superintendent were similarly fruitless. HISD refused to provide any other documents. Furthermore, the suit claims, HISD not only failed to assure the Osborns that the social transitioning of their daughter would cease, but also “ignored their request for that assurance.”

Based on this, the Osborns could only conclude:

HISD’s policy, practice, usage, and custom is to refer to students by names and pronouns associated with the opposite sex on request of the student without parental notice or consent, while actively concealing these actions from parents, and even over express parental objections....

[This is] a widespread practice that is so common and well-settled that it amounts to a custom that fairly represents HISD policy.

The Osborns contend that the policy should be overturned because it violates their First and 14th Amendment rights and their right to direct the upbringing of their daughter.

In a [press release](#), ADF senior counsel Kate Anderson said:

Parents have the right to direct the upbringing, education, and health care of their children without fear of government interference. Schools should never hide vital information from parents, let alone go against their express instructions related to the well-being of their children. School officials should support parents, not replace them, and we are urging the



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court to make sure HISD updates its policy to respect these parents' constitutional rights.





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