

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson
Archdiocese of Indianapolis
1400 N. Meridian St.
Indianapolis, IN 46202

Dear Archbishop Thompson,

We believe in a Catholic Church that welcomes and affirms all people. Because of this, we are deeply pained and disappointed by the announcement of a recent policy for Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis that excludes students who have legally, medically, or surgically changed the gender assigned to them at birth to the gender these children, their families, their medical and mental health providers understand themselves to truly be.

This policy seems to echo the instructions of the 2019 document “Male and Female He Created Them: Toward a Path of Dialogue on Gender Theory in Education” issued by the Vatican’s Congregation for Catholic Education. That document fails to acknowledge current medical and social science that reflect evolutions in thinking on gender and sexuality among humanity and persists in promoting an obsolete ideology of biological determinism. We call on church leaders, in the United States and internationally, to enter into real dialogue with transgender and nonbinary individuals, their families, and experts who have worked with these people, and to do so with deep humility. We believe that the experience of people whose gender identity differs from that assigned to them can help us better understand a God of vast imagination and boundless love. That can only enrich our church, our understanding of incarnation, and what it means to truly honor the human dignity of each person.

Research has repeatedly shown that transgender, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming youth whose gender identity is suppressed are eight (8) times more likely to have attempted suicide and six (6) times more likely to report high levels of depression than those whose parents and caregivers offer affirmation and support.* We believe it is imperative that our church leaders do all in their power to help end this mental health crisis among our children. This policy does just the opposite.

Most importantly, we call for this policy and other similar policies under consideration or about to be released to be rescinded. We must return to opening the doors of Catholic schools, parishes, health centers, and social service agencies to all who want to enter. We must meet the needs and embrace the gifts of each person who graces us with their presence. We stand with transgender, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming youth in Indianapolis and beyond. We stand with their families. We stand with all Catholics who prioritize love and inclusion over dogma. We stand in the conviction that our church can do better.

** For example, Family Acceptance Project, Supportive Families, Healthy Children, 2009.*

In the hope that justice will be done,

DignityUSA