



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on May 20, 2024

## School Counselor Expelled From Teachers Union Over Criticism of District's Gender Policy

A Minnesota teachers union has expelled an elementary-school counselor for publicly challenging her school district's long-hidden policy of keeping students' in-school gender switches a secret from their parents.

On May 9, Rochester Education Association (REA) President Vince Wagner informed Christina Barton, a Rochester Public Schools (RPS) student counselor, by [letter](#) that she was being expelled from the union "effective immediately" because, among other things, she allegedly "mischaracterized Rochester Public Schools policies and practices regarding LGBTQ+ students, spoke negatively of fellow union members, and spread misinformation about transgender youth" in a [YouTube interview](#).



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These actions, Wagner wrote, constituted a violation of the National Education Association's (NEA's) code of ethics, specifically, clauses related to a member's interaction with students.

"REA recognizes that you are free to hold whatever viewpoints you wish regarding LGBTQ+ students or any other matter," penned Wagner, "but viewpoints are not free from consequences, especially if they cause or contribute to unprofessional behavior."

According to [MPR News](#), RPS "crafted" new gender guidelines "last fall." Those [guidelines](#), which were not ratified by the school board until this month, state: "All students have a right to privacy, including the right to keep private one's transgender or gender expansive status at school. Transgender and gender-expansive students have the right to discuss and express their gender identity and expression openly and to decide when, how, and with whom to share private information, [as] well as to determine what information will be shared."

RPS Superintendent Kent Pekel explained that "if a parent asks school staff about how their child is expressing their gender at school, staff should share whatever information they have," but "staff won't proactively seek this information from students or volunteer this information to parents," noted MPR.

During a March 19 school-board meeting, Barton [brought up](#) the matter of the then-unapproved guidelines even though, she testified, she had been "warned [by RPS personnel] against making these guidelines public" under the threat of retaliation up to and including termination.

"The guidelines state that they only inform parents of their student's identity 'if they request it,'" observed Barton. "So how would a parent know to request such information if they aren't aware their child is struggling with gender dysphoria? How would a parent be able to care for and support their student if the school never reached out to them?"



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In what MPR characterized as “an unusual move,” the REA “board issued a statement in support of the guidelines and condemning Barton’s opposition saying that her views didn’t represent the views of union members.”

[The Christian Post](#) reported that, in her subsequent YouTube interview,

Barton said ... that her school district did not share the guidelines until February during a staff meeting. In addition to staff members, the counselor claimed that the district did not share the guidelines with parents and community members. She also alleged that during one staff development meeting, the staff was shown a “disturbing” video about transgenderism and how they should withhold the information from parents.

On April 22, the RPS executive director of human resources, Karl Bakken, sent Barton a “non-disciplinary letter” warning her not to “make factually incorrect statements” regarding district policies and — irony of ironies — to avoid retaliating “against any person involved in reporting or addressing your behavior.”

Bakken stated that, contrary to Barton’s assertion that the guidelines were being kept from the public, they “have been shared with over 100 district administrators who were told to share it if they needed to.”

“This is not transparent and still leaves parents out of the information,” Barton told [American Experiment](#). “Also, according to the district, the guidelines were only shared with administrators — this leaves staff, students, and the community in the dark too. That is the reason I say they are ‘hidden’ guidelines.”

“Parents need to be able to support their children if they are struggling,” she added. “A parent-child relationship is crucial to their development, and parents should be engaged by schools in that relationship.”

Barton testified again at the May 7 school-board meeting. Two days later, she was kicked out of the REA — which, under Minnesota law, will still represent her in contract negotiations even though she now has no say in its decisions.

The REA’s [constitution and bylaws](#) permit the union to expel a member only after “observ[ing]” the member’s “due process rights.” According to [American Experiment](#), “Barton states she was never given due process rights.”

But what is due process compared to the sacred rights of transgender students? Teachers unions, being typically left-wing, are among the trans cult’s most ardent evangelists, and they will brook no dissent. British teachers unions, for example, are up in arms over their government’s recent [rejection of trans ideology](#), with one union spokesman whining that the government is “seeding doubts” about teachers’ and administrators’ judgment.

“It seems that in a culture where ‘all are welcome’ and ‘kindness abides and bullying isn’t allowed’ that only those employees who succumb to censorship and intimidation are welcome,” Barton told [American Experiment](#).

“Following my public statement to the school board on March 19, I have experienced countless retaliatory responses that are unprofessional, inaccurate, and very hurtful to me as a person as well as a concerned counselor and parent who is merely trying to advocate in the best interests of kids and on



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behalf of all parents,” she said. “I love my students with all of my heart and soul; always have, always will.”





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