



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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No Place for Religion

South Kingstown, Rhode Island — February 1, 2018. Today, the Center for Religious Expression (CRE), sent a letter to South Kingstown School District officials, asking that they eliminate a school policy that discriminatorily prohibits first grader Isabella Lomastro from sharing her faith at school during non-instructional free time by giving Bibles and other religious literature to her classmates.

Isabella wants to share the love of Jesus with her classmates. So, on October 5, 2017, during non-instructional free time, while her classmates were coloring, Isabella asked her teacher if she could pass out Christian-themed coloring sheets, and also give Bibles to her friends. But her teacher informed her that was not allowed, and, after inspecting Isabella's religious literature promptly escorted her to the Principal's Office. There, the principal told Isabella that school was no place for religion and confiscated her religious literature. The principal returned the item's to Isabella's mother, Justina Pineda, along with a letter indicating that Isabella's conduct was prohibited under a school district policy. As a result, Isabella was left fearful that sharing her faith at school would get her punished.

Hoping to understand the policy and secure Isabella's rights, Pineda met with the superintendent of the South Kingstown School District and inquired as to how Isabella's expression violated the policy. The superintendent confirmed that the issue was, in fact, the religious messaging on the literature, explaining that such messaging could not be handed out on school grounds at any time. In contrast, the superintendent noted that during non-instructional free time, students could freely hand each other non-religious items, such as birthday party invitations.

To regain Isabella's First Amendment rights, CRE sent a letter to school district officials, explaining the patent unconstitutionality of a ban on students' non-disruptive religious expression during non-instructional time. The letter requests that the district abandon its policy and allow Isabella to freely share her religious literature.

"Students retain their First Amendment rights when they attend public schools," said CRE Chief Counsel Nate Kellum. "So the school cannot discriminatorily target and ban student speech just because it is religious."

Center for Religious Expression is a servant-oriented, non-profit 501(c)(3) Christian legal organization dedicated to the glory of God and the religious freedom of His people. For more information, visit <http://www.crelaw.org>.