



## THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC BIOETHICS CENTER

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### **Bioethics Public Policy Report January 2, 2024**

#### **State by State**

- Maryland is holding a referendum in 2024 to amend their state constitution to establish a constitutional “right” to abortion access. The amendment requires only a simple majority to pass in the State. The language of the proposed amendment would ensure that “every person, as a central component of an individual’s rights to liberty and equality, has the fundamental right to reproductive freedom, including but not limited to the ability to make and effectuate decisions to prevent, continue, or end one’s own pregnancy.” For further information, click [here](#).
- California Governor Gavin Newsom signed a bill into law requiring toy stores to have “gender neutral” sections. While the legislation does not outlaw “gendered” terms for types of toys, Greg Burt of the California Family Council says that the law is “government-compelled speech,” since it forces stores to establish a new category in advertising its toys. For further information, click [here](#).

#### **Federal Courts**

- Michigan parents are suing the Rockford Public School District for violating their First Amendment and Fourteenth Amendment rights under the Constitution by treating their daughter like a boy and deceiving them about her “gender transition.” Specifically, they assert that the free exercise of their religion and the right to make decisions about their child’s upbringing both have been violated by the school district. For further information, click [here](#).
- A federal judge in Idaho issued an order stopping enforcement of newly passed laws preventing “gender affirming care” for minors in the State. Citing Fourteenth Amendment jurisprudence, the judge said that the amendment’s purpose was “to protect disfavored minorities and preserve our fundamental rights from legislative overreach,” comparing laws preventing gender transitions of minors to slavery. Idaho Attorney General Raul Labrador has said that the State will be appealing the decision. For further information, click [here](#).
- Pro-life activists won a settlement against the National Archives Museum in Washington D.C. museum guards told them to cover the pro-life messages on their clothing. The guards claimed that such messages might disturb the peace, since they were controversial, but the gift shop sold LGBTQ-themed shirts and pins with expressive statements. For further information, click [here](#).
- First Choice Women’s Resource Centers, a crisis pregnancy center in New Jersey represented by the Alliance Defending Freedom, filed suit against New Jersey Attorney General Matthew Platkin after Platkin issued what First Choice calls an “unreasonable

and improper subpoena” which “mandates disclosure of privileged and/or irrelevant materials to advance an investigation that does not appear to be based on a complaint or other reason to suspect unlawful activity, and which selectively and unlawfully targets First Choice.” For further information, click [here](#).

## **International**

- The National Congress of Brazil passed an amendment to the Budgetary Guidelines Law cutting spending on abortion and transgender surgeries for minors. While President Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva is expected to veto the amendment, it passed by a wide margin in both houses (House 305–141; Senate 43–26). Federal deputy Eduardo Bolsonaro, son of former president Jair Bolsonaro, proposed the amendment. For further information, click [here](#).
- In India, Father Babu Francis was released from prison in India on December 22 after having been arrested for violating the “anti-conversion” laws of the state of Uttar Pradesh on October 1. Uttar Pradesh is one of 28 states in India that have passed such laws against forced conversions, which, practically, have been applied primarily against Christians practicing their faith. For further information, click [here](#).
- The U.K. Department for Education issued new guidelines stating that schools should only rarely encourage pronoun changes by students, citing that it is a “significant decision” to agree with a student’s gender identity. The guidelines also stated that younger children, specifically, “should not have different pronouns” than their biological sex. The guidelines come as the U.K. and several other European countries have been cutting back on transgender ideology, at least among minors. For further information, click [here](#).
- The European Union (EU) has warned three high-traffic pornography sites that they must comply with the EU’s age verification and safety measure requirements within Europe. The sites are bound by the provisions of the Digital Services Act passed in 2022, since they are deemed “very large online platforms” under the law. For further information, click [here](#).
- President Andrej Duda of Poland signed a law providing public funding for in vitro fertilization (IVF). Duda, a conservative, cited declining birth rates in his decision to sign, not deterred by Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki’s letter asking Duda to veto the bill as not being in keeping with the Catholic Church’s teachings on sexuality. For further information, click [here](#).

## **Of Note**

- Father Paul Sullins, a Catholic priest with a doctorate in sociology, asserts that a widely cited and accepted study, “Blosnich et al,” which links suicide with conversion therapy, is seriously scientifically flawed. Father Sullins reexamined the study by controlling for preexisting distress and found that Blosnich’s data did not take this into account. Had it done so, the purported negative effects of conversion therapy would have been eliminated. Father Sullins says that Blosnich’s study makes “the fundamental error of associating a cause that took place after the effect.” For further information, click [here](#).

***Sharing the News:*** If you have public policy news that you would like to share with the NCBC, or if you have colleagues who would like to receive the Bioethics Public Policy Report, please contact the NCBC at [info@nbcneter.org](mailto:info@nbcneter.org). Previous editions of this report are available through the [Public Policy](#) page of the NCBC website.

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The National Catholic Bioethics Center webpage, available at <http://www.nbcneter.org/>, is a significant resource for bioethics information. NCBC bioethicists are also on-call for consultation twenty-four hours a day, seven days per week, at 215-877-2660.