



JAMES UTHMEIER
ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF FLORIDA

PL-01 The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1050
Phone (850) 414-3300
Fax (850) 487-0168
<https://www.myfloridalegal.com>

October 15, 2025

Superintendent Ronnie Gray
and School Board of Suwannee County
1740 Ohio Avenue South
Live Oak, Florida 32064

Dear Superintendent Gray and Suwannee County School Board Members:

Our Office of Parental Rights received a complaint reporting that a student at Suwannee High School was denied the ability to start a Turning Point USA chapter. The student was told that the organization was “too political” and that “Suwannee schools does not want to be associated with it.” The student was later told that she could start *a* club, but that it would have to be called “Constitution Club” or “Debate Club,” and meetings could not be held on campus. Should these facts be confirmed—and we have no basis to doubt their reliability—then the school’s decision violates federal law, the School Board’s policy, and ethical principles for the education profession.

The Equal Access Act of 1984 (“Act”) made it unlawful for any public secondary school that receives federal funds and which provides a limited open forum to “deny equal access or a fair opportunity to, or discriminate against, any students who wish to conduct a meeting within that limited open forum on the basis of the religious, political, philosophical, or other content of the speech at such meetings.”¹ A public secondary school has a limited open forum when it offers “one or more noncurriculum related student groups to meet on school premises during noninstructional time.”² A noncurriculum related student group means “any student group that does not *directly* relate to the body of courses offered by the school.”³ Suwannee High School appears to offer several noncurriculum related student groups, which triggers the Act’s requirement to grant equal access to student groups.⁴ With that in view, the school unlawfully discriminated by blocking the formation of a Turning Point USA chapter.

The Suwannee County School Board’s policy provides, “[n]o person shall, on the basis of ... political or religious beliefs ... be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination

¹ 20 U.S.C. § 4071(a).

² *Id.* § 4071(b).

³ *Board of Educ. Of Westside Community Schools v. Mergens By and Through Mergens*, 496 U.S. 226, 239 (1990) (emphasis in original).

⁴ *Clubs & Activities*, Suwannee High, shs.suwannee.k12.fl.us/o/shs/.

under any education program or activity.”⁵ Florida educators and administrators are bound, moreover, by the Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida, and must not “discriminate against any student on the basis of ... political beliefs,” “unreasonably deny a student access to diverse points of view,” “unreasonably restrain a student from independent action in pursuit of learning,” or “intentionally violate or deny a student’s legal rights.”⁶ Suwannee High School’s refusal to allow its students to start a Turning Point USA chapter—because of its perceived “political” nature—runs afoul of the School Board’s policy and the ethical obligations of Florida educators. It may also raise constitutional concerns⁷ that this office is equipped to enforce.⁸

Denying a student the ability to form a Turning Point USA chapter at a public secondary school is tantamount to political discrimination. This is completely unacceptable. Turning Point USA and its founder, Charlie Kirk, exemplified a return to civic and peaceful debate—even on the day’s most hotly contested issues. It is admirable that one of your students wants to bring a chapter and those values to Suwannee High School. It’s not only permissible; it is an affirmative good the school should encourage and embrace. Good sense should dictate the correct decision here. Failing that, however, the law demands it.

Suwannee High School must immediately cease its discriminatory practices and grant the student equal access to form and operate a Turning Point USA chapter. My office proudly supports students who champion the values for which Charlie Kirk gave his last full measure of devotion.

Sincerely,



James Uthmeier
Attorney General

Cc: Anastasios Kamoutsas, Commissioner
Florida Department of Education

⁵ *Policy Manual*, Suwannee County School Board, digitalbell-bucket.s3.amazonaws.com/8F9B40E4-5056-907D-8DFD-B7038E98A673.pdf.

⁶ Fla. Admin. Code R. 6A-10.081(2)(a)2., 3., 8., and 10.

⁷ U.S. Const. amend. I; Fla. Const. art. I, §§ 4–5; *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503, 506 (1969) (explaining that students do not “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.”).

⁸ § 760.51, Fla. Stat. (empowering the Attorney General to “bring a civil or administrative action for damages, and for injunctive or other appropriate relief” whenever “[a]ny person ... interferes by threats, intimidation, or coercion, or attempts to interfere by threats, intimidation, or coercion, with the exercise or enjoyment by any other person of rights secured by the State Constitution or laws of this state”).