

June 1, 2025

The Honorable John Thune
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House of Representatives
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader Thune, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Johnson, and Minority Leader Jeffries,

Today marks the 100th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court’s landmark decision for parental rights in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*. This historical decision recognized “the liberty of parents and guardians to direct the upbringing and education of children under their control.” And it was here that the high court famously declared, “The child is not the mere creature of the State; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations.”

The anniversary of *Pierce* serves as an important reminder that parents have the right—and “high duty”—to raise and educate their children. That is why the Promise to America’s Parents Coalition supports S. 204 and H.R. 650. We urge Congress to pass the Families’ Rights and Responsibilities Act (FRRA) and protect families by preserving parental rights.

Our coalition of over 50 organizations represents parents across the political spectrum. Our members include parents from diverse political, racial, and religious backgrounds. We work at all levels of government to protect every parent’s right to make decisions regarding their child’s education and healthcare.

Our coalition has embraced the 10 principles for sound laws and policies that protect parental rights as set forth in the *Promise to America’s Parents* (www.promisetoamericasparents.org). These standards are based on government Accountability, Choice, and Transparency (ACT). The FRRA aligns with these principles.

Children flourish within strong families led by their parents. Parents—not the government—play the primary role in raising their children. Parents have duties and corresponding natural rights to guide their children’s care and upbringing, including their children’s education and healthcare. Our country has long recognized the importance of families and the primary role of parents as decision-makers for their children.

Indeed, the U.S. Supreme Court has acknowledged that parental rights are among the “oldest of the fundamental liberty interests recognized by [the] Court.” See *Troxel v. Granville* (2000). The Supreme Court has upheld parental rights as fundamental rights protected by the Constitution for over 100 years. However, some federal courts have failed to apply the “strict scrutiny” standard of review to parental rights. By applying an improper standard of judicial review, they have not treated parental rights as top-tier constitutionally protected rights.

Amidst such confusion in the courts, federal laws and policies have encroached on the rights of parents at an alarming rate and to a greater degree. Here are just a few examples of federal policies/actions that undermine parents’ fundamental right to direct the upbringing, education, and healthcare of their children:

1. The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) educates more than 69,000 American children worldwide and provides faculty and staff training that “advises teachers to build special relationships with students, and *even to keep information from parents.*” (emphasis added)
2. The Department of Defense denies military parents access to their children’s medical records through the MHS GENESIS patient portal once their children turn 13 years old.
3. 4-H, an organization funded and administered by the Department of Agriculture’s Cooperative Extension System, published a guidance document in 2020 entitled “Practices for Inclusion of Individuals of All Genders and Sexual Orientations.” Pursuant to this guidance, “4-H will treat all participants according to their gender identity, *even if a youth member’s own guardian raises objections.*” (emphasis added)
4. The Teen Connection Project—funded by the National Institute of Health—pays minors to participate in a program that pairs them with “transgender and other gender minority adults [who] serve as mentors.” The consent form explicitly states that *minors “do not have to get [their] caregivers’/parents’ permission to be part of this project.”* (emphasis added)
5. The national suicide hotline (funded by almost \$1.5 billion from the Department of Health and Human Services) “provide[s] specialized support services to. . .LGBTQI+ youth.” The hotline connects minors (*often without parental knowledge or consent*) to counselors at transgender activist organizations like the Trevor Project—a group that supports secrecy from parents.
6. Medicaid funds are used to support school-based health centers (SBHCs) nationwide. SBHCs are a gateway for student access to mental health and reproductive services without parents’ knowledge. Some centers (like in California) offer students as young as 12 both contraceptives and the “Plan B” abortion pill—*without parental consent* and with no full medical history or physical exam required.

Congress has the authority to limit federal government actions to protect parents’ constitutional rights to raise and nurture their children. The FRRRA codifies that the proper standard of review—“strict scrutiny”—should be applied to federal actions that substantially burden parental rights. The U.S. Supreme Court held in *Sherbert v. Verner* (1963) and several other cases that the “strict scrutiny” standard must be applied when

fundamental constitutional rights are burdened. Congress can pass the FRRA without infringing on the separation of powers doctrine.

The "strict scrutiny" standard means that simply disagreeing with parenting choices is not enough to warrant government intrusion into the family realm. Instead, the government will need to show that it has a compelling interest for its policy and has used the least restrictive means to achieve its interest.

The family is the fundamental building block of American society. Therefore, government interference with parental educational choices, moral and religious training of the child, and physical and mental healthcare decisions should be subjected to the most rigorous judicial scrutiny.

The FRRA will allow parents to hold the government accountable when it oversteps its proper bounds. This legislation will ensure that parents have choices regarding their child's education and health. It will give parents the transparency needed to make decisions for their children by ensuring they can access their children's education and medical records.

This bill aligns with the principles outlined in the *Promise to America's Parents*, which are supported by the signatories to this letter. Congress should stand with America's parents and pass the FRRA so parents can direct their children's upbringing, education, and healthcare.

Parents know and love their children best and preserving parental rights safeguards families and protects children. When families are strong, the nation will be stronger. We respectfully urge you to enact this legislation so that all federal courts treat parental rights with the respect they deserve.

Respectfully,

Advocates Protecting Children
Alliance Defending Freedom
Awake Americans
Awake Illinois
Best in Ed
California Family Council
Californians for Equal Rights Foundation
Capitol Resource Institute
Center for Arizona Policy
Coalition of Virtue
Concerned Women for America Action
Courage is a Habit
Defense of Freedom Institute
Discovery Institute
Do No Harm Action
Family Foundation of Virginia
Family Freedom Project

Family Policy Alliance
Family Watch International
Florida Family Voice
Focus on the Family
Frontline Policy Action
Heritage Foundation
Maryland Family Institute
Massachusetts Family Institute
Military Families in Support of Parental Rights
Moms for America
Moms for Liberty
National Association of Christian Lawmakers
NC Values Coalition
Palmetto Family
Parental Rights Florida
Parental Rights Foundation
Parental Rights Iowa
Protect Our Kids
Real Impact
Religious Freedom Institute
Restore Childhood
True North Legal
Truth in Education