



## PRESS RELEASE

# Supreme Court Requires Religious Opt-Outs from Secular Lessons in Public Schools

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**WASHINGTON** – The U.S. Supreme Court [ruled](#) today in *Mahmoud v. Taylor* that Montgomery County Public Schools must allow opt-outs from any lessons that parents believe will interfere with the religious development of their children, including LGBTQ-themed materials. The decision could have far-reaching consequences for public schools’ ability to create an inclusive and welcoming environment that reflects the diversity of their communities, as well schools’ ability to implement any secular lesson plan that may trigger religious objections.

The case involves a district policy that prohibits all opt-outs from the district’s English Language Arts curriculum. The curriculum, which includes some LGBTQ-themed books and resources, is secular, age-appropriate, and designed to be inclusive.

“While fundamentally important, religious freedom shouldn’t force public schools to exempt students from any secular lessons that don’t align with their families’ religious views,” said **Daniel Mach, director of the ACLU’s Program on Freedom of Religion and Belief**. “This decision could wreak havoc on public schools, tying their hands on basic curricular decisions and undermining their ability to prepare students to live in our pluralistic society.”

“Today’s decision in *Mahmoud v. Taylor* is a drastic break from decades of precedent,” said **Cecillia Wang, national legal director of the ACLU**. “For the first time now, parents with religious objections are empowered to pick and choose from a secular public school curriculum, interfering with the school district’s legitimate educational purposes and its ability to operate schools without disruption – ironically, in a case where the curriculum is designed to foster civility and understanding across differences.”

**Deborah Jeon, legal director for the ACLU of Maryland**, added: “Today’s decision is deeply disappointing. Our public-education system should be one that embraces differences as an opportunity to foster understanding and bring people together.”

In April, the American Civil Liberties Union and the ACLU of Maryland filed an [amicus brief](#) arguing that MCPS’s policy prohibiting opt-outs from the English Language Arts curriculum is religiously neutral and applicable across the board and should be analyzed under a lower standard of legal review, which the policy easily satisfies.

This case is part of the ACLU’s [Joan and Irwin Jacobs Supreme Court Docket](#).

The ruling is here: [https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/24pdf/24-297\\_4f14.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/24pdf/24-297_4f14.pdf)

This statement is here: <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/supreme-court-requires-religious-opt-outs-from-secular-lessons-in-public-schools>

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