

Transgender student denied on-campus male housing at Christian university

Sarah Pulliam Bailey | Religion News Service | Apr. 9, 2014

A transgender college sophomore has filed a complaint against a Christian university in Oregon after school officials said he couldn't live with other men on campus during the forthcoming school year.

Jayce M., as he is identified in the George Fox University student newspaper, has been undergoing a female-to-male transition, and next week, a judge is expected to issue a court order allowing him to change his gender on his birth certificate and Social Security card.

Now, Jayce is fighting to live in male housing, and his lawyer has filed a formal complaint against the college, alleging discrimination on the basis of sex and gender, a violation of Title IX, the complaint claims.

George Fox University issued a statement on Friday, saying it was a "complex situation."

"George Fox strives to be a Christ-centered community and our residential facilities are single gender because of our theological commitments," the statement said. "The university has researched the student's attorney's legal claims and believes they are without merit, especially given the religious nature of the university."

The university has made many efforts to provide support and accommodation for the student, the statement said.

"While the university did not grant his request to live on campus with males, the student was not denied on-campus housing," the statement said. "He was offered the option of an on-campus single apartment with a commitment from Student Life to ensuring he stayed socially connected to the community."

His lawyer, Paul Southwick, filed a discrimination complaint with the U.S. Department of Education, alleging that the school is violating Title IX, which requires universities that receive federal funding to treat all sexes equally. Southwick argues that the school cannot invoke religious reasons for discriminating against transgendered people.

"Title IX does not have a religious exemption for housing discrimination," Southwick said in an email to *The Crescent*. "It has a religious exemption for admissions, but that is not implicated here. The Oregon Equality Act also protects Jayce from discrimination in housing and public accommodations on the basis of his gender identity."

Jayce's mother, Janice, has launched a Change.org petition with more than 4,000 supporters asking the university to stop denying her son's on-campus housing request.

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