



AMERICAN PRINCIPLES PROJECT

May 6, 2024

To Republican Members and Senators,

As you know, the Biden Administration has spent more than three years weaponizing the United States government against the American people. Much of its overreach has targeted parents – who could forget the Department of Justice harassing parents for attending school board meetings, or the Department of Health and Human Services finalizing a rule to remove children from foster families that refuse to promote transgender ideology?

But now Biden's administrative state has decided to wage holy war against Christian colleges. This crusade has a dual purpose: to protect the higher education cartel against competition, and to persecute any Christian institution that dares to stand for biblical teaching and against cultural marxism. Through his cronies at the Department of Education (USED), President Biden is sending a message: resistance to the regime's woke orthodoxy, even when it is protected by our right to religious freedom, is completely unacceptable and will no longer be tolerated.

We cannot stress enough the importance of protecting these valuable institutions. Christian colleges serve not only as educational bodies but also as communities where biblical values are upheld and explored in depth. They also serve as a bulwark against increasing anti-American, anti-Christian, and anti-semitic sentiment within the culture – we're certainly not seeing Hamas terrorism apologists intimidating their fellow students at these schools! There's a reason why woke ideologues at USED have made Christian colleges a target. They understand that schools like Ashland University, Grand Canyon University, and Liberty University are critical to our defense of constitutional principles and the American way of life.

Furthermore, the conventional model of higher education in the U.S. is failing. The average sticker price at four-year colleges and universities has increased nearly 130

percent since 1990¹. Almost half of college graduates within five years of graduation are underemployed and working jobs that don't require a college degree, and 94 percent of business leaders say they try to avoid hiring recent graduates²³. It's no wonder that most Americans do not believe a college degree is worth the cost, or that enrollment numbers at conventional four-year colleges are at their lowest levels in a decade while enrollment at Christian schools like Grand Canyon University continues to increase.

On behalf of the undersigned pro-family, pro-faith, and pro-life organizations and leaders, we write to encourage you to use all power at your disposal to fight back against this egregious and unfair attack against Christian institutions of higher learning.

To date, the Biden Administration has engaged in three obviously politically motivated attacks against Christian colleges (that we are aware of):

- In 2021, USED decided to conduct a surprise audit of Ashland University's financial aid program, the first in nearly 40 years. Ashland, which is the country's longest-serving provider of corrections education, was accused by USED of using an incorrect formula for determining the amount of the Pell Grants that Ashland's incarcerated students were entitled to receive. USED alleges that resulted in an overpayment of more than \$6 million, and has assessed Ashland a fine to recoup that amount. Ashland asserts that its educational programs for incarcerated students (referred to as Second Chance Pell or SCP students) are fully compliant with federal standards and identical in content and structure to programs offered to non-incarcerated students. In its lawsuit against USED, Ashland argues that the Department "manipulated the university's curriculum by redefining the programs offered by the plaintiff in an effort to satisfy the defendant's interpretation of an "eligible program" under Title IV of the Higher Education Act. Ashland is also asking the court for declaratory judgment finding that USED's actions were "arbitrary, capricious [and] an abuse of discretion."⁴
- In October 2023, USED slapped Grand Canyon University (GCU) with a record \$37.7 million fine for allegedly engaging in false advertising and misrepresenting the cost of earning a doctoral degree. GCU happens to be the country's largest Christian school with more than 100,000 students enrolled each year. But USED's claims don't seem to hold much water. A federal court already dismissed similar claims in a private lawsuit brought against the school. And as the Wall

¹ <https://educationdata.org/average-cost-of-college-by-year>

² <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/04/12/10-facts-about-todays-college-graduates/>

³ <https://www.intelligent.com/4-in-10-business-leaders-say-recent-college-grads-are-unprepared-to-enter-workforce/>

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<https://www.law.com/2023/09/29/ohio-based-ashland-university-claims-department-of-education-wrongly-imposed-6m-fine-over-second-chance-pell-grant-program/?slreturn=20240330115631>

Street Journal noted, the allegations “appear to be false... doctoral students comprise fewer than 5 percent of GCU’s enrollment.”⁵

- In March 2024, Liberty University agreed to pay USED a \$14 million fine for allegedly failing to disclose information about crime on campus. This is the largest fine ever assessed under the Clery Act, a law which requires schools that receive federal funding to publish an annual report detailing crime statistics and campus safety initiatives. Per a statement from Liberty University, the institution “acknowledge[s] and sincerely regret[s] past program deficiencies and ha[s] since corrected these errors with great care and concern.” But it would appear that USED treated Liberty University much differently than non-Christian colleges. “In the report, many of the Department’s methodologies, findings, and calculations were drastically different from their historic treatment of other universities... Liberty disagrees with this approach and maintains that we have repeatedly endured selective and unfair treatment by the Department.⁶” Notably, the fine USED levied against Liberty University was more than three times larger than the \$4.5 million fine levied against Michigan State in 2019 for underreporting sex crimes under the Clery Act, including the abuse of hundreds of women by former team doctor, Larry Nassar.⁷

It’s pretty clear what’s happening here. USED is actively engaging in a search-and-destroy mission to undermine schools that challenge left-wing orthodoxy and offer students the ability to learn real skills at an affordable price. And they’re succeeding – these are enormous fines that will absolutely impact the Christian students that attend these universities who want to be affiliated with a school that best fits their values.

We need your help.

On April 8th, Reps. Andy Biggs, Paul Gosar, Debbie Lesko, and Eli Crane sent a letter demanding that the Office of Inspector General begin an investigation into the Department of Education’s actions concerning Grand Canyon University.⁸ This action on behalf of Christian colleges was incredibly valuable and helped to start the conversation

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<https://www.wsj.com/articles/bidens-assault-on-a-christian-college-grand-canyon-university-education-for-profit-447e587a>

⁶ <https://www.newsweek.com/liberty-university-slams-biden-administration-after-14-million-fine-1876224>

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/09/06/education-department-fines-michigan-state-45-million-not-reporting-nassar-crimes>

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<https://biggs.house.gov/media/press-releases/congressman-biggs-demands-investigation-outrageous-377-million-fine-against>

on this issue. But ultimately, if we are to discourage the Biden Administration from continuing its witch hunt against Christian schools, we will need more Members and Senators to engage.

For some of you, an opportunity will come on Tuesday morning (May 7th) when USED Secretary Miguel Cardona testifies before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. A few possible questions for Secretary Cardona: why the search-and-destroy effort against Christian colleges? Why did USED fine Michigan State only \$4.5 million for covering up Larry Nassar's hundreds of crimes, while it fined Liberty University a record \$14 million under the same statute? What prompted the audit against Ashland University in 2021? Has USED ever imposed a \$6 million fine for Pell Grant formula "miscalculations" on a non-Christian school? What additional evidence did USED uncover that justified a \$37.7 million fine against Grand Canyon University when a federal court initially dismissed the case outright? All these questions must be answered for the American people.

Legislative oversight is necessary to stop the Biden Administration's assault on not only parents, families, and Christian institutions, but constitutional democracy itself. On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we urge you to demand answers from the Department of Education for its rationale behind these unjustified attacks and to implement legislative controls to prevent future abuse.

Sincerely,

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