

Monday, March 20, 2023

Constitution and Limited Government Subcommittee

“Free Speech: The Biden Administration’s Chilling of Parents’ Fundamental Rights.”

1. Good afternoon, distinguished members of the Constitution and Limited Government Subcommittee. My name is Tiffany Justice, co-founder of Moms for Liberty, a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that unites, educates and empowers parents to defend their parental rights. Founded in 2021, Moms for Liberty has 275 chapters in 44 states, and growing every month.
2. I want to begin by thanking you for taking up this important topic. Free speech has been chilled for too long by our own government and your attention to this issue is a patriotic act of bravery. I applaud you for bringing attention to the intimidation and harassment of law-abiding citizens.
3. Parents have the fundamental right to direct the upbringing of their children. This includes their education, medical care, morality and religion. I want to be clear,- these are inherent, natural rights. These are not rights bestowed by government. Parental rights do not stop at the classroom door. We do not coparent with the government.
4. In March 2020, public schools across the country were closed without parental input. Tina Descovich and I, co-founders of Moms for Liberty, were serving on school boards in Florida. We got to see this situation both through the eyes of parents with children in public schools, and as school board members.
5. School districts shifted to virtual learning, but accountability for teaching and learning was lacking. Despite documented low student engagement, graduation rates remained steady, and federally mandated services were not being provided despite continued funding.

6. Parents watched in horror as teachers unions fought to keep schools closed. We watched as our children struggled with depression and anxiety, their development regressing at every turn. Nationally, parents were asking when and how we had become a nation more concerned with protecting adults than children?
7. Parents desperately wanted to help their children and they turned to their school boards to try to understand why it was okay for people to gather for riots in the streets but not for students to gather to learn in the classroom.
8. In the U.S., the right to petition the government to correct a wrong or achieve a goal is fundamental to the workings of our constitutional republic.
9. Parents who took up this right were silenced, then the premier law enforcement agency of the United States of America, the FBI, was used as a weapon by the DOJ against parents who dared to voice their concerns at the most local level- their school board.
10. Thanks to a whistle-blower, we now have evidence that Attorney General Garland instructed the FBI to take action against parents, and the FBI created a "threat tag" for parents who spoke up in a public meeting for their children. How dare you?
11. One of our Moms was ONE of those parents targeted.
12. One minute you are making lunches and packing backpacks, then the phone rang. It's the FBI, asking questions about your remarks at last weeks school board meeting. Do you have a history of mental health illness? Do you have any guns in your home? Oh, and by the way, don't tell anyone we called.
13. When this mother called me, I was numb. It was shocking. What was I to say? Can the FBI demand confidentiality? I honestly didn't know. I immediately worked to make members of the Judiciary Committee aware of this situation.
14. Did the actions of the Biden Administration chill the free speech of parents? Yes. There is no doubt. It sent shockwaves across the country that we still feel today.

15. And what did this mom do wrong? She disagreed with her school board? That is not illegal. In this country, are we not free to have differing views?
16. 115k members strong, we attended school board meetings, often facing unjust treatment. Parents were expelled, their mics were cut off, and many were prevented from speaking. Americans peacefully exercising their constitutional rights were labeled as enemies of the state.
17. We are moms, dads, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and concerned citizens. We are not “domestic terrorists.” We will not be silenced to protect a failing system.
18. The DOJ BETRAYED THE TRUST of the American people. There must be accountability. Thank you again for bringing this to light.
19. While the FBI made phone calls to parents who spoke out at meetings and wrote memos calling concerned parents “domestic terrorists” – I submit to you what the federal government was NOT doing was paying attention to the duty of schools to EDUCATE our children.
20. America's public education system is failing. These are the facts: In 2022, the National Center for Education Statistics conducted a study of the long-term trends in reading and math assessments for 9 year olds to examine student achievement during the pandemic. Average scores declined 5 points in reading and 7 points in mathematics compared to 2020. **This is the largest average score decline in reading since 1990, and** the first ever score decline in mathematics. <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/ltr/2022/>
21. Perhaps, the silencing of parents was meant to hide these facts. But we see. Our eyes are opened to a distressing truth that our children are being taught to distrust the sanctity of their own homes and to view the nation as broken and unjust. We witness schools and states fueling this fire. Encouraging such beliefs to take hold.
22. I ask you to hold accountable those that violated their oath to the Constitution, who trampled on our right to be heard, and who sought to use their position of power to subvert “we the parents”.

23. The number one indicator of student success is parental involvement. Any action by government that undermines that, jeopardizes the very future of our nation.
24. We are Joyful Warriors. We are going to fight like hell for the future of this country with a smile on our face because our kids are watching. Our members build relationships, spread truth to educate their communities and empower others to do the same.
25. The DOJ and the FBI made a mistake when they tried to get between us parents and our children. There is no power that supersedes a parent's love for a child, and we will not be pushed out of the way in decisions about our children's education or their future. That is the power of parents.