

Pacific Justice Institute:  
Defending religious freedoms, parental rights, and other civil liberties.

## PJI Files Federal Lawsuit in Florida on behalf of Christian Employee

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**MIAMI, FL** – Pacific Justice Institute (PJI) attorney Alexander Bumbu filed a federal lawsuit today on behalf of a Christian employee who was suspended and fired by Miami-Dade County because of his religious speech and beliefs.

John Labriola, who served as a media aide for the Board of County Commissioners of Miami-Dade County from 2013 to 2021, was suspended without pay for three days and ordered to attend a punitive extra “diversity” training program after he wrote an online opinion piece disagreeing with left-wing sexual and gender ideologies, and the so-called “Equality Act.” Labriola then refused to undergo the punitive extra training program on the belief that it would have required him to apologize for his beliefs and to refer to people who identify as transgender by their “preferred pronouns”, which do not correspond to their biological sex – speech to which Labriola has religious objections. For invoking his free exercise right and his right as a public employee to resist that compelled speech, Labriola was fired. After the firing, the County’s HR department admitted that it “did not find any evidence to establish that [Mr. Labriola] was engaged in any harassing or discriminatory behavior based on any protected characteristic within the workplace” after it interviewed all of his coworkers.

“Without question, Miami-Dade County violated the First Amendment,” said Brad Dacus, President of PJI. “Mr. Bumbu will hold the County accountable in a court of law.”

In his opinion piece, which was written on his private time as a private citizen and published in an obscure online publication, Labriola criticized the Equality Act's promotion of abortion on demand, homosexual "marriage," and transgenderism. He also criticized its threat to women's sports and privacy, parental rights, freedom of religion, and freedom of expression, noting that it "would be used as a battering ram to prosecute and abolish the free speech rights of anyone who dares defy the left's sexual and gender ideologies."

"PJI filed this complaint on Mr. Labriola's behalf to protect his and others' constitutional rights to free speech, the free exercise of religion, and free press," said Mr. Bumbu. "The County's actions jeopardize the core constitutional rights of every County employee by threatening them with termination for simply exercising those rights. The County's actions also undermine religious tolerance and ignore the fact that tolerance is a two-way street. Mr. Labriola did not forfeit the fundamental First Amendment rights that he holds as a private citizen by virtue of accepting public employment. Thankfully, our Constitution protects the freedom to express even those thoughts that others hate."

PJI initiated this case, *John E. Labriola v. Miami-Dade County*, in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida.

PJI is one of the largest religious non-profit legal organizations in the country, with offices from coast to coast – including its strategically-located office in South Florida. PJI has been a beacon for religious liberty since 1997. [Contribute today!](#)

To read the full complaint filed by PJI in federal court, please [click here](#).

Running the Race,

Brad Dacus

President and Founder, Pacific Justice Institute

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