

'Paper terrorism': Parents opposed to school mask mandates use sham legal claims to intimidate teachers

Teachers and staff members of her school district in Bethalto, Illinois, a small town outside of St. Louis, were suddenly worried that they would not be paid.

They had seen videos posted online in which a parent who objected to the district's Covid mask mandate said that she had filed a claim against the district's insurance, causing the schools to lose all federal funding.

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The parent's claims were baseless. She had no ability to use the mask mandate to file a claim against the district's insurance policy, or affect its federal funding in any way.

But the scare tactic has become a familiar one. A growing number of school districts across the country are facing similar challenges from parent activists who have adopted strategies and language that are well known to law enforcement and extremism experts who deal with far-right "sovereign citizen" groups in the U.S. The Southern Poverty Law Center and Anti-Defamation League call it "paper terrorism."

The parents' strategy is simple: Try to use obscure and often inapplicable legal claims to force a school district to make a policy change. And while the claims have no legal standing, they have been effective at spreading confusion and wasting school districts' resources.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.**](#)