

July 7, 2015

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the 97 organizations below, we write to urge you to vote in favor of the Student Non-Discrimination Act, which Senator Franken plans to offer as an amendment to the Every Child Achieves Act.

Students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) or perceived to be LGBT are subject to well-documented, pervasive discrimination, including harassment, bullying, intimidation, and violence. These students are deprived of equal educational opportunities in public schools across our nation. Numerous studies demonstrate that discrimination at school has contributed to high rates of absenteeism, dropout, adverse health consequences, and academic under-achievement among LGBT youth. When left unchecked, such discrimination can lead to – and has led to – dangerous situations for youth.

Federal statutory protections currently address discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, and disability. However, statutory protections based on sexual orientation or gender identity are limited. The Student Non-Discrimination Act would explicitly prohibit public schools from discriminating against any student on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. The legislation also protects students who associate with LGBT people, including students with LGBT parents and friends.

As our nation's primary statute promoting equal access to education, it is vital that ESEA ensures that every student is able to attend school in a safe, inclusive environment free from discrimination and harassment. Decades of civil rights history show that civil rights laws are effective in decreasing discrimination against specific vulnerable groups. It is time that we extend these laws to explicitly protect LGBT youth.

Again, we urge you to vote in favor of the Student Non-Discrimination Act amendment to the Every Child Achieves Act.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth
African American Ministers In Action – Equal Justice Task Force
AIDS United
ALSO Youth
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Civil Liberties Union
American Federation of Teachers
American Humanist Association
American Psychological Association
American School Counselor Association
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
Anti-Defamation League

Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Athlete Ally
Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center
Campus Pride
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
Colorado Springs Queer Collective
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates
Education Law Center
Equality Federation
Family Equality Council
FORGE, Inc.
Futures Without Violence
Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD)
Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
Gay-Straight Alliance Network
GO! Athletes
Gwinnett SToPP
Healthy Teen Network
Human Rights Campaign
Interfaith Alliance
International Gay and Lesbian Football Association
Lambda Legal
League of United Latin American Citizens
Lesbian Health Initiative (LHI)
LGBT Network
LGBT Visitor Center on Miami Beach
Long Island Gay and Lesbian Youth
Long Island LGBT Community Center
Los Angeles LGBT Center
Marriage Equality USA
Maryland Women's Heritage Center
Memphis Gay and Lesbian Community Center
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE)
National Asia Pacific American Women's Forum
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Coalition for LGBT Health
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)

National Education Association
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Network for Youth
National Organization for Women
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
New Leaders
NMAC
Nollie Jenkins Family Center, Inc.
People For the American Way
PFLAG National
Phoenix Pride LGBT Center
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Pride at Work
Queens LGBT Center (QCenter)
Resource Center
Secular Coalition for America
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
SHAPE America
Southern Education Foundation
Southern Poverty Law Center
Teach for America
Teach Plus
The Bully Project
The Center: 7 Rivers LGBTQ Connection
The DC Center for the LGBT Community
The Gay and Lesbian Center of Southern Nevada
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The Montrose Center
The Trevor Project
Transathlete.com
Transgender Law Center
True Colors Fund
Union for Reform Judaism
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
Women's Law Project
Women's Sports Foundation
Youth on Board