

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