



League of United Latin American Citizens

March 18, 2014

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Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the nation's oldest and largest Latino civil rights organization, I write to urge you to support both the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA, H.R. 1199 & S. 403) and the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA, H.R. 1652 & S. 1088). SNDA classifies harassment as a form of discrimination and bans discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity from public schools. SSIA is a proposed amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that focuses on using local educational agencies to create policies that ensure harassment doesn't impede education.

Each time another news story comes out about the suicide of a gay teen, we must ask ourselves what we as a nation can do about it. Last year, I contacted your office about the tragedy of Carlos Vigil, a 17 year old Latino student from New Mexico, who committed suicide after posting a note on his Twitter account about the bullying he had suffered over the years. While not a solution to anti-gay prejudice, SNDA and SSIA represent a positive step forward in protecting our students from this kind of harassment. Both of these bills would help establish policies in schools across the nation that would help put an end to such egregious bullying. These bills are not only about the government offering protections, but they would also empower families to act in ensuring the safety of their children. As of now, families have limited or no recourse for putting an end to harassment against their child. These bills would give hope to parents worried about their kids and feeling powerless to help.

According to a study by the Center for Disease Control, lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are four times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight peers. This alarming statistic is connected to their school environments: each episode of LGBT victimization, such as physical or verbal harassment or abuse, increases the likelihood of self-harming behavior by 2.5 times on average. Children who feel unsafe at schools also have a hard time focusing on their studies, and suffer academically.

I am attaching to this letter the final message that Carlos imparted to the world, the note he tweeted just before taking his own life, along with an article, so that you may read for yourself about the circumstances of this incident and understand how it connects to these two bills. Each story such as Carlos' is one too many.

I thank you for your service and look forward to working with you as Congress continues to consider these crucial bills. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Luis Torres, Director of Policy and Legislation, at 202-833-6130, or by email at latorres@lulac.org.

Sincerely,

Margaret Moran
LULAC National President

(No Subject)

July 13, 2013, 3:06 PM

I'm sorry to those who I offended over the years. I'm blind to see that I, as a human being, suck. I'm an individual who is doing an injustice to the world and it's time for me to leave. Please don't ever feel sorry for me, or cry - because I had an opportunity at life and that opportunity is over. I'm sorry that I wasn't able to love someone or have someone love me. I guess it's best though, because now I leave no pain onto anyone. The kids in school are right, I am a loser, a freak, and a fag and in no way is that acceptable for people to deal with. I'm sorry for not being a person that would make someone proud.

**Image from Carlos' Twitter
Posted July 13, 2013**
<https://twitter.com/Chillll>

Hours later, the teen committed suicide.

As word spread Monday, local gay rights groups issued statements condemning bullying. Classmates of the teen have held fundraisers for the family.

Carlos was an active member at Warehouse 508, an Albuquerque safe haven where teens learn about art and culture. The organization is now offering grief counseling to other students, the teen's friends and his family.

Family members outside of Warehouse 508 declined an on-camera interview Monday but said they hope their son doesn't die in vain.

They are keeping his Twitter account open so his story can live on and so more people will be aware of the bullying problems in the community.

Read more: <http://www.koat.com/news/new-mexico/albuquerque/bullying-could-be-cause-behind-los-lunas-teens-suicide/-/9153728/20992392/-/ay2fv3z/-/index.html#ixzz2ZnU9IHJf>

“Bullying could be cause behind Los Lunas teen's suicide”

KOAT 7

July 15, 2013

By Tanya Mendis

LOS LUNAS, N.M. —Bullies may have led a Los Lunas teen to take his own life this weekend.

Carlos Vigil was a 17-year-old Los Lunas High School student who had just returned from a trip out of state where friends said he spoke out against bullying.

On his Twitter account this weekend, he posted a chilling message that read: "The kids at school are right. I'm a loser, a freak ...and in no way is that acceptable for people to deal with."

Carlos claimed the kids called him gay slurs and he apologized for "not being a person that would make someone proud."