



Supporting LGBTQ+ Students in the Face of Discriminatory Legislation

On behalf of school psychologists, school nurses, school counselors, school social workers, student service administrators, psychologists, and parents throughout the state of Florida, we jointly write this memo of support in solidarity with LGBTQ+ students following their tremendous leadership and advocacy with the #DSGWalkout in response to HB1557 Parental Rights, also referenced in the media as the “Don’t Say Gay” Bill. We also stand with our colleagues in schools across the state who supported the [rights of students to peaceful assembly in protest](#).

It is important to recognize that even the introduction and discussion of this type of legislation has consequences. Specifically, 94% of LGBTQ+ students said that recent politics had negatively impacted their mental health with more than 40% reporting having considered suicide in the previous year.¹ Devastatingly, nearly half of all students reported desired counseling from a mental health professional but have not been able to receive it. As parents, please continue to encourage your children to reach out to trusted adults, including school staff, to access help. Please rest assured that we have your child’s best interest at heart. It is always our goal to help students have difficult conversations with their family in ways that are safe, healthy, and supportive.

We also know that it is incumbent upon us to help. Schools should be welcoming, safe, and inclusive places for youth, families, and staff members who identify as LGBTQ+. We know that being in spaces that affirm and celebrate a young person’s identities is a protective factor against suicide.² As school-based and community-based mental health professionals, we will continue to provide that safe space for students and continue to advocate for these safe spaces in all areas where children are. We promise to work together to fight against bills like HB1557 that stand in direct contrast to our values as mental health professionals, our codes of ethics, and legislation which endanger youth.

What can we say to LGBTQ+ youth now?

- I’m here for you.
- You matter.
- You are valid.
- I support you.
- We’re going to advocate for you.
- I see you, hear you, and value you.
- You are wonderful just the way you are.

What can parents do now to support youth who identify as LGBTQ+?³

- It is not too late to ask the governor to [VETO THIS BILL!](#) Remind him of the [First Lady’s initiative to improve mental health for youth](#) and the harm that this bill brings to the mental health of LGBTQ+ youth across the state of Florida.
- Support your local [GSA](#) and [PFLAG](#) chapters. If your student’s school doesn’t currently have a GSA, consider supporting the school and/or your student with starting one now. Students need support and connection now more than ever.
- Make your support visible with [graphics](#) and [posters](#) you can share to social media, put in your car window, etc. - anywhere that youth can visibly see that they are seen, valued, and supported.
- Follow organizations including the [National Association of School Psychologists Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth](#) page, [Equality Florida](#), [GLSEN](#), [The Trevor Project](#), [Transgender Law Center](#), [National Center for Transgender Equality](#).
- Honor and celebrate transgender students on March 31st during the [International Transgender Day of Visibility](#) and encourage your child’s school and school district to do so.
- Educate yourself on the signs of suicide and how to talk with youth who are struggling with their mental health or suicidality. Reach out to your school’s school-based mental health team (their school psychologist, school counselor, school social worker, or school nurse) or a community-based mental health provider to get help.
 - American Medical Association’s [Preventing Suicide in LGBTQ+ Youth](#)

¹ The Trevor Project National Survey on LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2021/>

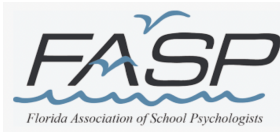
² The Trevor Project National Survey on LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2021/>

³ Adapted from the National Center for School Mental Health

- National Health Law Program [Help Prevent Suicide Among LGBTQ+ Youth](#)
- Check out additional resources and share them with your child’s school and district’s school board:
 - The National Association of School Social Workers [Press Release with Resources as well as Legal Precedents](#)
 - Human Rights Campaign [Welcoming Schools](#) Resources for Families
 - Equality Florida’s [Safe & Healthy Schools Project](#)
 - Call Him Hunter [Ally Moms](#)

In solidarity,

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