



**Testimony of the New York City Department of Education
on the Treatment of LGBT Students, Families and Staff in the NYC Public School System**

Before the New York City Council Committees on Education

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Kathleen Grimm, Deputy Chancellor

Good afternoon, Chair Dromm and Members of the Education Committee here today. My name is Kathleen Grimm, Deputy Chancellor of the Division of Operations at the New York City Department of Education (DOE). I am joined by Elayna Konstan, Chief Executive Officer of the Office of Safety and Youth Development (OSYD) and Connie Cuttle, Director of Professional Development, also with OSYD. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Department's efforts to support Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT) students and their parents, students whose parents are LGBT, as well as LGBT staff.

One of the Department of Education's fundamental responsibilities is to provide a safe and supportive learning environment that is inclusive of all students and their families. The Department has made significant strides in addressing the needs of LGBT students and their families as well as students who come from families of same sex parents, and we recognize there is always more work to be done. Our Respect For All (RFA) program, administered by the OYSD, is the cornerstone of these efforts. We would like to thank the City Council for its strong support of RFA, and for making this issue a top priority.

Since its inception in 2007, RFA has provided our schools with a vision and framework to foster inclusive school communities. The program grew out of a concerted citywide effort to promote respect for diversity and combat harassment, discrimination and bullying in the aftermath of 9/11. A significant part of our post 9/11 work was training for K-12 school staff, which included full-day workshops provided by the NYC LGBT Center's YES Program.

A key focus of the RFA program continues to be professional development because of the vital role school staff play in creating a supportive and inclusive school culture and the critical impact they have in nurturing positive social behavior in our students. The purpose of all RFA professional development, which is either one or two full days, is to build awareness and sensitivity and increase staff capacity to prevent and intervene in bullying behavior and bias-based harassment. Our collaborative partners in this work are the Anti-Defamation League, the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN), Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility and Operation Respect. These organizations, along with the YES Program from the LGBT Center, collaborated with the DOE in the design of the two-day training each RFA Liaison has been mandated to complete since 2008. Each principal is required to designate at least one staff member, referred to as the RFA liaison(s) to whom reports by students or staff members of student-on-student discrimination, harassment, intimidation and/or bullying can be made and who serves as a resource for students and staff on this issue.



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All RFA training includes LGBT components. For example, to model using children's literature to promote respect for diversity, K-5 classroom teachers are introduced to books like Todd Parr's *Family Book*, which presents children from different kinds of families, Parr's *It's Okay to Be Different* and James Howe's *Pinky and Rex and the Bully*. Training for RFA Liaisons serving grades 6-12 use the LGBT experience as a lens to examine the impact of bias and discrimination on youth and the essential role adults play in prevention and intervention. Examples of training components include: an LGBT history timeline in which other key civil rights and social milestones are interspersed to provide context; "Voices," an exercise based on statements made by LGBT students; and an examination of the homophobic bias faced by Bayard Rustin, organizer of the 1963 March on Washington.

To further assist schools in understanding and implementing inclusive instructional practices, the document *Implementing Respect For All: A Guide to Promoting a Safe and Inclusive School Environment for All Students and Complying with the Dignity Act* is sent to all principals each September. It provides specific guidance on inclusive pedagogy including key questions to ask as part of regular and rigorous examination of curriculum and pedagogical practice. The guide also includes a section "Creating an Inclusive School Community: Sensitivity to the Experience of Specific Student Populations," which specifically addresses issues facing LGBT children. Also provided to all principals is a training document *Respect For All: Making School Safe and Supportive for All Students* for mandated annual staff training.

Each year we have expanded RFA professional development. We have, for example, provided classroom teachers with training on a K-8 and high school anti-bias curriculum. Beginning in 2010, a series of citywide conferences for middle and high school deans and counselors - **Promoting Respect For Diversity/Preventing Hate Crime** - was conducted in collaboration with the NY State Division of Human Rights, the NYC Human Rights Commission and the NYPD Hate Crimes Task Force to emphasize the influence school staff can have in preventing hate crime through their ongoing work with youth. Last year a full day conference for guidance counselors and Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Specialists (SAPIS) included workshops by the Trevor Project- *How to Support LGBT Youth* and *Trevor Ally Training* and *Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays' - Working with Parents of LGBT Youth*. This fall we began training on K-5 and 6-12 curriculum modules to move students from being bystanders to allies.

The DOE's *Respect For All Library*, which can be accessed from the DOE homepage, provides families and students with access to a range of resources including fact sheets, guidance documents, and age appropriate materials specifically designed for students. The library provides our educators with standards-based lesson plans, book lists and other instructional materials. Also made available are professional development opportunities, current research and opportunities to engage with community-based organizations that offer additional training and programmatic supports, and student projects such as *No Name Calling Day* and the *No Place For Hate Program*. Resources to support LGBT students are found throughout the library, and I encourage you to visit.



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These central initiatives are only a part of the DOE's efforts. Our schools work with many community-based organizations to provide staff training and direct services to students. Organizations include PFLAG's Safe Schools Program, which engages thousands of students in workshops every year, ENACT, GLSEN –which two years ago donated a Safe Space Kit to all of our middle and high schools. The list of collaborators goes on: Operation Respect, Facing History and Ourselves, Counseling in Schools, the Anti-Defamation League, the Trevor Project, Morningside Center, Partnership With Children, to name only a handful. These partnerships have been critical to our work on bullying and biased-based harassment prevention in our schools, and we are thankful for their commitment and assistance.

Sensitivity to, and awareness of, the needs of LGBT students and families are an integral part of the DOE's work to promote respect for diversity. Representatives from the DOE's Office of School Support and the Office of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) attend monthly meetings of the NYC LGBT Community Center's (the Center), LGBT Parent Advisory to the Department. These meetings are held at the Center and are attended by families, professionals, advocates and elected officials. They provide an important venue to share information about the DOE and other City agencies, the UFT and other organizations that impact or support LGBT students and families. Participants of these meetings develop strategies to encourage more parent participation including outreach through the DOE-Facebook and Twitter accounts.

The DOE has had a longstanding partnership with the Center's parent advisory group. As a result of this partnership, since 2006, critical DOE documents sent to the families of our students use the gender neutral term "parent." In addition to meeting regularly with the Center's parent group, FACE has provided parent workshops about bullying. For example, during Parents as Partners Week in October 2013, FACE held a screening of the documentary *Bully* with the film maker who conducted a conversation with parents after the screening. Parent workshop topics on this spring's schedule include Respect For All and training on cyberbullying.

We are equally concerned for the wellbeing of our LGBT staff members. Chancellor's Regulation A-830 sets forth the DOE's Anti-Discrimination Policy and establishes an internal review process for employees who wish to file complaints of unlawful discrimination or harassment, or retaliation based on such complaints. In order to develop and maintain a positive and supportive learning and working environment that is free of discrimination, harassment, retaliation and intimidation, the full cooperation of every staff member is necessary. Employees are expected to be exemplary role models in the schools and offices in which they serve. Supervisors are required to maintain an environment free of unlawful discrimination and discriminatory harassment. Behavior which violates the DOE's anti-discrimination policy may serve as a basis for discipline.

In addition to the Department's Anti-Discrimination Policy, other Chancellor's Regulations address staff-to-student and student-to-student relations. Chancellor's Regulation A-420 and A-421 prohibit corporal punishment and verbal abuse by staff members against students including behavior which constitutes bullying, intimidation and harassment. Chancellor's Regulation A-832 prohibits harassment, intimidation and/or bullying committed by students against other students and discrimination by students against other students on account of actual



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or perceived race, color, creed, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship/immigration status, religion, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability or weight and establishes a process for reporting, investigating and addressing complaints of such behavior. Chancellor's Regulation A-831 prohibits peer sexual harassment regardless of the gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity of any of the students involved. To be sensitive and responsive to students' needs, we created an RFA email account specifically designated for a student to use if he or she feels uncomfortable making a report of bullying or harassment to a school staff member. Likewise, a parent may use the RFA email to seek assistance.

Because many questions arise when considering the best supports for transgender students, the Department recently issued *Transgender Student Guidelines* to provide direction for schools to address issues that may arise concerning the needs of transgender students. These guidelines are intended to help schools ensure a safe learning environment free of discrimination and harassment, and to promote the educational and social integration of transgender students.

We are keenly aware of the risk factors facing LGBT young people. The National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a self-administered, anonymous survey conducted every two years in public and private high schools throughout the United States by the Centers for Disease Control. While the 2011 YRBS revealed that NYC public high school students reported a 9 percent lower incidence rate of bullying compared to the rest of the nation, NYC youth who identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual were more likely to be bullied as compared with youth who identified as heterosexual (29 percent to 17 percent.) Of equal concern is that youth in NYC who reported being bullied were more likely to report other behaviors that put them at risk for poor health outcomes, compared with NYC youth who did not report being bullied. The report also found that youth who were bullied were more likely to have sought help from a professional counselor, social worker or therapist for an emotional or personal issue, compared with non-bullied youth (24 percent to 14 percent.)

We are deeply committed to increasing our students' access to health services. The Office of School Health a joint program of DOE and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), provides a comprehensive array of health and mental health, which are integrated with other student support measures, including training of DOE staff; and partnerships with community organizations that provide mental health support to students and families. Currently 197 programs offer on-site treatment in School-Based Mental Health Clinics with an additional 8 sites expected to open before the end of the school year. Services include: individual, family, and group counseling, case management, school community outreach, and 24 hour crisis coverage if needed. All community-based organizations provide interventions that are evidence based, family-focused and culturally and linguistically appropriate.

In addition, in the Bronx, for example, the Department is piloting a strategy in 17 schools that have formalized partnerships with mental health, child-serving state and local agencies. A Mobile Response Team Model in Brooklyn provides 10 middle schools with direct interventions such as: consultations, assessments, referrals to treatment, classroom observation, and teacher and parent training in addition to providing crisis intervention. Beginning in the 2014 school year, the model is being expanded to include five middle schools in Queens, five in Manhattan



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and five in the Bronx. Further, providers that work in our School-based Health Centers (SBHCs), including nurse practitioners, health educators, social workers, are trained on LGBT issues, and their offices have rainbow stickers identifying each SBHC as an LGBT friendly place. DOE's Office of School Wellness Programs provides health education training and recommended materials that include LGBT topics. We collaborated with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and the publisher of the *Reducing the Risk* curriculum to develop *Understanding Self-Identity*, which is part of our recommended high school health education curriculum. We are also in the first year of a five year Centers for Disease Control grant which focuses on sexual health topics and creating safe and supportive school environments, with a particular focus on LGBT students.

In conclusion, we aim to provide all of our students with a safe and supportive environment where they can learn and grow. In this vein, we are deeply committed to addressing the needs of LGBT students, students who come from families with LGBT parents and LGBT staff. While we have made enormous progress, as in any large and diverse system, we recognize there is always more work to be done. Our 1,800 schools are at different stages in this work, and it is our mission to support and develop all of them to be models of positive school culture where all students and their families feel safe, included, and respected. We look forward to continuing to partner with the City Council to reach this goal. With that, we are happy to answer any questions you may have.

2/25/14

My name is Maisie Baronian. I am currently a senior at Forest Hills High School. I attended elementary school at PS3, and middle school at MS51 and Halsey Junior High School.

Growing up with a gay mom and with best friends who all have two moms has definitely shaped my life experience and has made me a person who stands up to homophobia. When I was about four years old, I was shocked when I found out that my friend Josh actually had a dad, not two moms. I went to an elementary school in Greenwich Village, where a number of the kids had gay parents and a number of the teachers were gay. For a long time in my life, I never realized that any of this was outside the social norm.

It was not until camp the summer I was nine, when a girl made a face and said "ew" when I told her about my mom and her partner, that I learned not everyone was open and accepting. That school year, the phrase "You're so gay" was the worst insult anybody could use, but I was always ready with a quick reply. One day a girl said it to a boy who was standing next to me, and I responded with, "There's nothing wrong with gay people." That was enough to end the conversation.

When I got to middle school, using the word gay as an insult was so popular that I felt totally overwhelmed by the idea of saying something to every person who used it. In a school of one thousand kids, it seemed impossible to have a personal conversation with all of the kids using the word gay negatively. This only increased in high school, when people started to substitute the word "fag" for gay, using it to describe other kids, teachers, and homework assignments. This infuriated me. The times that I did confront people about it, their response to "There's nothing wrong with being gay" was often, "Yes, there is." Yet again, I felt defeated by the impossibility of saying something every single time I heard a nasty phrase being used.

I talked to friends who went to other schools who did not seem to struggle with this problem. I thought about what it was that made my school different from the others. Many people at my school come from families and communities that are not as accepting of the LGBT community. Because of these deeply-seeded cultural

beliefs, I began to realize that I would have to act on a larger level than one-on-one conversations if I had a chance of solving this problem.

Another major difference I saw in my school versus my friends' is that most high schools across the New York City had Gay Straight Alliances, or some similar organization, but we didn't at Forest Hills. I felt strongly that the only way to actually make some sort of change for the greater good around LGBT issues was to create a GSA in my own school. The idea appealed to me because a Gay Straight Alliance is a way to educate not just one person at a time, but the general public at my school.

I was ready to act, but I had no idea about the challenges I was going to face or that it would take me more than a year to actually start the GSA. I began the proposal junior year, but I was informed by the Student Activities Coordinator that there were no more club spaces available. This was not the first time this type of club was proposed- I later found out that the idea had been shut down before. This September, I was approved to found a club that would create a safe space and be a forum to discuss the homophobia we see every day and develop action plans to change it.

The next step was to find an advisor. This was quite difficult; at least seven teachers said no. After months of trying, I spent a lunch period brainstorming with our Head Dean and the Student Activities Coordinator. Though the meeting felt unsuccessful, I got pulled out of my next period class by the Student Activities Coordinator. As she left the Dean's office, she told a fellow teacher about the problems I'd had getting an advisor. Thrillingly and unexpectedly, that teacher volunteered to advise the club as soon as she finished her graduate school thesis.

Our first meeting was in January. I had, with permission, put up posters around the school announcing the first meeting and intentions of the GSA, but I arrived at school the next morning to discover they had been taken down by a dean. This was followed by the Student Activities Coordinator neglecting to announce the meeting during morning announcements, both of which meant that two of my friends were the only people who showed up to the first meeting. The next week, I handed the Student Activities Coordinator the message I wanted her to read, and

that helped enrollment for the second meeting. Unfortunately, due to weather complications, many of our meetings since have been canceled. We are now about seven members and our first project is working to raise awareness that the club exists, which is a good first step to making change. It has taken a lot of perseverance to get this club started, and I hope that students from the younger grades can be inspired to keep the club going.

FOR THE RECORD

TESTIMONY

The Council of the City of New York
Committee on Education
Daniel Dromm, Chair

Oversight – The Treatment of LGBT students, family and
staff in the NYC public school system
February 25, 2014
New York, New York

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Lawyers For Children submits this testimony to the City Council, and thanks the Committee on Education for providing us with an opportunity to share our thoughts and the experiences of our LGBTQ clients in the New York City public school system.

Lawyers For Children (“LFC”) is a not-for-profit legal corporation dedicated to protecting the rights of individual children in foster care and compelling system-wide child welfare reform in New York City. For nearly 30 years, LFC has provided free legal and social work services to children in cases involving foster care, abuse, neglect, termination of parental rights, adoption, guardianship, custody and visitation. Currently, we represent children and youth in more than 6,000 judicial proceedings in New York City’s Family Courts each year. The two attorneys who direct LFC’s LGBTQ project represent individual clients in Family Court, conduct trainings to educate social workers and attorneys regarding the rights and needs of LGBTQ youth, work to effect policy and legislative change, and publish materials for youth and the adults working with them, including *You Are Not Alone: A Handbook for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth in New York City’s Foster Care System*.

LGBTQ students in foster care face overwhelming odds of educational failure due to the acute shortage of safe, affirming school placements and foster homes. As the Community Service Society and Children’s Aid Society noted in their report *Foster Care and Disconnected Youth: A Way Forward for New York*, “LGBTQ youth face additional challenges related to acceptance of their sexual orientation by others. These youth often are targets of discrimination, harassment and violence by peers and others and they face a lack of acceptance in group homes and foster care. They are also likely to skip and drop out of school because of threats to their safety.”¹ High school graduation rates for youth in foster care are substantially lower than for the general population. To be an LGBTQ youth in foster care attempting to obtain a high school diploma is to face overwhelming odds. The City Council must ensure that the Department of Education and Administration for Children’s Services take all necessary steps to improve the educational experience and outcomes for this population.

Due, in part, to the shortage of LGBTQ-affirming foster homes, LGBTQ youth are more likely than others to experience multiple foster care

¹ Community Services Society and The Children’s Aid Society. (April 2013). *Foster Care and Disconnected Youth: A Way Forward for New York*. p. 15.

placements. With multiple foster care placements comes multiple school placements; numerous studies have shown that youth who experience multiple foster home and school placements are least likely to graduate from high school. In order to minimize the number of disruptions LGBTQ youth in foster care must be connected to welcoming, affirming schools, but making those connections is no easy task.

What follows is the story of just one of our clients struggling to find an affirming school.

L. came into care as a young teen. He was placed in a foster home on Long Island and transferred to a school near to his foster home. He developed strong connections with teachers at the school and found a supportive network of friends. Some time after entering care, L. came out to his friends and foster mother. Despite ACS' commitment to ensure that every foster home is an affirming home, L.'s foster mother was far from affirming after L. came out. The tension led to a termination of the placement, and L. was moved to a home far from his school – a two-hour commute. After the traumatic experience at his previous foster home, however, L. was extremely nervous about the prospect of facing further discrimination and intolerance at a new school. His LFC attorney sat down with him and they discussed how to identify an affirming school near to his new foster home. Eventually they picked the only high school in the area whose website listed a Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA). This became the deciding criteria for L. because he knew that a GSA meant a built-in peer support network and at least one adult ally.

The atmosphere for LGBTQ students in NYC varies widely from school to school – despite passage of the Dignity for All Students Act. Most youth do not know until they arrive whether a school is affirming, and most youth in foster care are simply placed in the school that is closest to their home. As a result, far too many LGBTQ youth are exposed to educational environments in which bias, harassment and marginalization are commonplace. Even in schools where students do not experience overt bias, LGBTQ youth are often given the distinct impression that they are irrelevant. For example, the standard sexual education curriculum completely ignores information about sexual health specific to the LGBTQ community. When a young person feels

marginalized, targeted or simply ignored, it is no surprise that the response is often to simply stop attending school.

The relationship between educational attainment and the ability of youth leaving foster care to remain housed, employed, and stable has been well-documented. It is, as such, especially important for our clients that each and every NYC school be an LGBTQ-affirming environment, where they can be given the best chance of success.

In order to improve the educational odds for LGBTQ students in foster care, LFC recommends that the following actions be taken:

1) The Department of Education must require that all NYC schools implement an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. This would mean the inclusion of LGBTQ people and history in the regular curriculum, and would ensure that the health curriculum covers issues relevant to LGBTQ youth. According to the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), the presence of this type of curriculum can have a significant positive impact on LGBTQ students' experiences, diminishing the numbers of LGBTQ students who feel unsafe and miss school, and making verbal teasing and attacks much less frequent. However, currently only 23% of New York schools have an inclusive curriculum.²

2) Every NYC high school must have a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA). As shown in the story of L., a GSA is a clear signal that there is a safe space at that school for an LGBTQ student. A GSA's existence means that there is a committed LGBTQ or ally staff to lead the group, and that the Principal is open to creating an affirming community. GSAs provide essential networks of peer support to struggling LGBTQ students, and help to foster an affirming atmosphere. There are more than 400 public high schools in NYC, but according to one estimate there are only about 60 with GSAs.³

3) Every school must identify supportive LGBT or allied staff and faculty. LGBT students, especially youth in foster

² GLSEN. (2013). *School Climate in New York (State Snapshot)*. New York: GLSEN.

³ GLSEN. *GSA Clubs in New York City Public Schools District – NY*. Retrieved February 24, 2014 from

<http://www.studentorganizing.org/gsalist/clubsdistricts.cfm?stateCode=NY&district=NEW%20YORK%20CITY%20PUBLIC%20SCHOOLS&RequestTimeout=600000>

care who may be lacking positive adult support from other resources, benefit from supportive adult connections.

4) The process for filing incident reports must be simple and uniform. Increasing the number of visible LGBTQ and Ally staff could be an important tool in increasing the ease of submitting incident reports.

5) The Department of Education must adopt comprehensive policies that address bullying and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression in schools. In New York only 8% of LGBTQ students attend a school with such a policy.⁴

6) The Administration for Children's Services must increase the number of LGBTQ affirming homes and facilitate easy identification of such homes. A major problem for LGBTQ students continues to be the lack of affirming homes. Although ACS' policy is that each of its foster homes is an affirming home, we have seen far too many clients who are forced to move homes after coming out as LGBTQ, and who lose a connection to a supportive school environment as a result. Those non-supportive homes need to be closed, and efforts to recruit additional LGBTQ foster parents increased. However, for such efforts to be successful there must also be an explicit protocol for identifying which are affirming homes for LGBTQ youth, so that these young people are not made to languish in unsafe settings while an affirming home is located.

7) ACS must be required to gather comprehensive data regarding the number of children and youth in care who are LGBT-identifying, the number of homes that have been identified as affirming, and the number of youth who have had to move homes due to non-supportive foster parents. Our experience has told us that most LGBT students struggle to find an affirming and supportive placement, however we do not represent all youth in foster care and therefore our knowledge is largely anecdotal. Without an increased commitment from ACS to provide data on these issues, it is difficult to accurately assess current conditions for LGBT youth in care.

⁴ GLSEN. (2013). *School Climate in New York (State Snapshot)*. New York: GLSEN.

In addressing the needs of LGBTQ youth in New York City's public school system, we urge the City Council to pay particular attention to a subcategory of LGBTQ youth who are least likely to receive and safe and appropriate education – LGBTQ youth in foster care. The City Council is in a unique position to tackle the inter-agency issues that must be addressed by the Department of Education and The Administration For Children's Services in order to assure that these youth have the best possible chance to succeed.

We are available to assist in any way possible to improve the services and quality of care for children who are in need.

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PRIDE & PROGRESS

New York City Council Education Committee
February 25, 2014
City Council Chambers, City Hall

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Lambda Independent Democrats of Brooklyn would like to thank Chairman Daniel Dromm and the NYC Council Education Committee for holding this oversight hearing on the treatment of LGBT students, families and staff in the city's public school system.

When the State Legislature passed the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA), New York State made a commitment to improving the lives of LGBT youth in public and charter schools. This legislation is meant to provide the students in public and charter schools in New York State with a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment, and bullying on school property, on school buses, and at school functions.

The problem in New York no longer requires a legislative fix. We already have a law in place. It is now the work of government and elected officials to ensure that DASA is being fully implemented with the appropriate protections and resources in place for LGBT youth.

One of the major underlying problems that needs to be addressed is the proper training of all staff that interact with youth from the NYC Department of Education (DOE) and the New York Police Department (NYPD). The 2009 National School Climate Survey released by the Gay Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) revealed that 85 percent of gay, transgender, and gender nonconforming students said they were verbally harassed at school because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, but only 37.6 percent reported the incident and believed action would be taken. This is an astonishing gap that must be addressed. Students must know which staff member(s) at their school are safe to speak with about sexuality and issues of harassment. Students must also be surrounded by faculty and staff, at all levels from cafeteria workers to teachers and principals who have received proper training on how to interact with LGBT youth. Having these resources in place is increasingly relevant as recent studies show the average age for a gay or lesbian youth to come out of the closet is now 16-years-old — down from earlier studies showing the average age at 19 to 23 years old. This means more New York City school students are coming out while they are in high school and not college, meaning this is an issue for DOE to address.

Outside of DOE staff, School Safety Officers who are under the jurisdiction of the NYPD must have proper training in working with LGBTQ youth. The NYPD LGBT Advisory Committee has been working with the NYPD to develop and implement LGBT training for School Safety Officers but a commitment must be made to put training in place citywide. These officers are on the ground throughout the city witnessing student interactions when they are not on campus, which means they may be witnessing more cases of harassment that go unreported.



LAMBDA INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS OF BROOKLYN
PRIDE & PROGRESS

Finally, government has the ability to help change the public's perceptions of the LGBT community. This can be done by integrating LGBT history and inclusive information about sexual orientation and gender identity into the school curriculum. This will shape the views of our city's youth by educating them and in turn building more straight allies and creating a more welcoming environment for youth to come out and express their sexual orientation and gender identity.

In closing, we would like to thank the Chairman Dromm, the City Council, the Department of Education and all of the organizations, community members and students who participated in this hearing. You are all helping to bring attention to this very important issue. We look forward to working with everyone to ensure that government is providing the proper resources and protections to LGBT youth in New York City.

FOR THE RECORD

**Asexuality Visibility and Education in Our Schools
New York City Council Committee on Education
February 25, 2014**

My name is Sara Moldofsky. I am 24 years old, and I consider myself to be asexual. I am a private school teacher in New York City who teaches science to 7th, 8th, and 10th graders, and I would like to thank you all for holding this hearing to discuss the role of LGBTQIA education in schools.

While any curriculum you discuss may not be directly implemented in my school, I see firsthand the importance of this kind of education. The vast majority of my students are extremely accepting of various sexual orientations. They struggle more with understanding and accepting the gender spectrum, but I believe that the generation I teach is more open-minded and aware than the one before them. I know a lot of this has to do with the education standards in schools.

One thing that I find currently lacking in even the most progressive sexual education program is coverage of asexuality as an orientation. Even among adults, I find that many are puzzled as to what it means to be considered "asexual." Generally, an asexual person is one who does not experience sexual attraction as an intrinsic part of who they are. It does not have to do with any sort of physical or hormonal problem, and it is not a choice, as celibacy would be. Many asexual people experience attraction (though not sexual) and desire relationships, but they have little or no interest in sexual activities. A study from 2004 published in *The Journal of Sex Research* claims that approximately 1% of people consider themselves to be asexual, which makes this a significant demographic worth addressing.

While asexuality may not be prevalent in the public eye, there is research being done on the topic, as well as a documentary film and a website (www.asexuality.org). The Asexuality Visibility and Education Network (AVEN) was founded in 2002 by David Jay, arguably the most public asexual activist. It covers many of the basics of asexuality and serves as a center for organization and discussion. The documentary *(A)sexual* also follows David Jay and several other asexuals in an attempt to bring awareness to the topic.

I strongly believe that asexuality needs to be more visible and addressed in schools. As an asexual myself, middle school and high school were difficult times for me. I had never heard of asexuality (like almost all middle and high school students), and it was not covered as part of my sex ed curriculum. While all my friends were deftly beginning to integrate sexual attraction and experiences as part of their life and personality, I was left confused, waiting, and mainly wondering what was wrong with me. My first year of college, I hastily entered a relationship--a sexual one--in an attempt to "be normal" and discover what everyone else was so passionate about. When I still found sex to be boring and uninteresting, I felt even worse. Now, I was failing

a partner as well, and I was certain that there was something wrong with me. It wasn't until after college that I discovered asexuality. While it was a huge relief to realize that there were other people like me and that I didn't have to try to force myself to be sexual, I had a lot of regret. I wish I had known sooner that it was okay to not have sex ever and that in this provocative, sex-driven culture, there were others like me who were fine just watching from the sidelines. I wish I had been able to accept myself for who I was in high school, or college.

I think that acceptance is a gift we can give today's children. More than ever, students are living in a hyper-sexualized world. With their laptops, tablets, and smartphones, they have constant access to anything on the Internet. My 7th graders gossip about which kids made out at which parties, and I know my school has had to deal with sexual activity with grades 7th and up. It's prevalent, and all the kids are talking about it except for the few who don't understand because, statistically, a few kids in any school will be asexual. I think it is extremely important that they are aware that they don't ever have to engage in sexual activity if they never feel that desire. I hope that today's asexual students don't have to worry that there is something wrong with them. If we can teach these kids that asexuality is an orientation and that it is normal and should be accepted, we can give these kids peace of mind and a sense of community that I and so many others before the age of AVEN did not have.

I admire what all of you are working for today: to create a more inclusive, safer world for all students. I urge you to consider including asexuality in the curriculum and any other measures as well. All our children need to know that they are seen, cared about, and respected.

Thank you for this opportunity. For more information, please contact press@asexuality.org.

Testimony of the United Federation of Teachers

Before the
New York City Council
Committee on Education

Regarding the Treatment of LGBT Students, Family and Staff in the New York
City Public School System

February 25, 2014

Good afternoon Chairman Dromm and all of the members of the education committee. My name is Sterling Roberson and I am the Vice President for Career and Technical Education at the United Federation of Teachers. On behalf of our members and UFT President Michael Mulgrew, I thank you for the opportunity to testify on this critical issue.

Our union commends the education committee for drawing attention to the treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, LGBT, students, staff and families in our city's public school system. We especially want to acknowledge Chairman Dromm's longstanding advocacy as a teacher and UFT chapter leader in support of LGBT people in our school communities. Creating a culture built on respect, tolerance and support of all members of the school community requires commitment and change in our schools and programs. There's a role for each of us to play as policymakers, elected officials, educators, students and families. We've made some progress in our school system, but we have more work to do.

As a union of educators and health and therapeutic professionals we've long understood and addressed the needs of our members around the full spectrum of issues faced by LGBT members. Battling workplace discrimination —whether based on race, gender, gender identity or other causes— and struggling to ensure a safe and healthy work environment is central to our UFT mission. We instituted a Member Assistance Program that offers short-term counseling and outside referrals to members and a Victim Support Program, co-sponsored with the Department of Education, that provides psychological support and practical assistance for staff members who are victims of workplace violence. Our parent union's American Federation of Teachers Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Caucus more specifically serves our LGBT member community. Our union also established an LGBT hotline so that we may offer assistance regarding discrimination, harassment, employment and any other issue our LGBT members might have.

Additionally, while this is not specifically targeted to our LGBT members, we provide hands-on assistance to members who are infected with and affected by HIV and AIDS.

The Culture of Bullying facing LGBT students

This boy had no close friends....I was especially angry to find out that my classmate was cutting himself because of being bullied. When the bullies started threatening him again, I stood up for him....Bullying is an offensive and vicious act, which must not be tolerated,

and which must be stopped as early as possible. Children should feel safe in the school environment, so that they can concentrate on learning, instead of being afraid. – MB.
JHS student submission to BRAVE essay contest

In 2011, the National School Climate Survey found that approximately 15 to 25 percent of American students are the targets of repeated bullying, and kids at all school levels are affected — elementary, middle and high school; the numbers jump to between 40 and 50 percent when it cyberbullying is factored in. Children are targeted for a host of reasons including: their appearance or size; sexuality or gender identity; race, ethnicity or religion; disability; or just because they are “different.”

We must be particularly vigilant about bullying against members of the LGBT community.

For certain populations in our schools, most notably LGBT students, the bullying problem is much bigger: 85 percent of LGBT students are verbally harassed, 40 percent are physically harassed and 19 percent are physically assaulted at school. For these reasons in 2011, our governing body, the Delegate Assembly, established the BRAVE (Building Respect, Acceptance and Voice through Education) initiative to address these issues more holistically and to give voice to students and families needing support.

We are past the point of asking a question about whether LGBT students face intolerance and are treated as different. The headlines blast tragic details about young people taking their own lives burdened by the weight of bullying and harassment. Most stories don't receive a national spotlight, but the harm is pervasive nevertheless.

Working through the Mental Health Association of New York City (MHA) we created the BRAVE hotline to help provide a lifeline to students and families and to offer referrals for services to face these issues in a supportive environment. Due to MHA's confidentiality rules we can't share specific stories, but 8 percent of the calls to the hotline have specifically been about LGBT issues.

Policies, Programs and Laws Can Make a Difference

A main cause that provokes bullying is sexual orientation... Often, a bully will use this against someone and will harass them until they are pushed past their limits and resort to suicide. Discrimination against sexual orientation is also very important for it often occurs even amongst adults and is something people deal with their whole life. – D. M.
student submission BRAVE essay contest

There is no single approach to providing a safe, healthy and welcoming environment for LGBT students, staff and families. According to the American Educational Research Association in its 2013 white paper “Prevention of Bullying in Schools, Colleges and Universities,” intolerance takes different forms and therefore requires targeted interventions.

The DOE made an excellent first step with the introduction of the 2008 Chancellor's regulation A-832, which establishes procedures for the filing, investigation, and resolution of complaints of student-to-student, bias-based harassment, intimidation or bullying. This was the genesis for designating school-based staff to address harassment issues and for the annual Respect for All

Week which has citywide activities to build greater awareness and move the conversation forward between staff and students and among peer groups.

We along with a broad coalition of advocates lobbied for and won passage of the New York State Dignity for All Students Act in 2010, which expanded the categories for protection against harassment and discrimination of individuals on school property or at a school function to actions “based upon a person’s actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex.”

Of particular note at both the city and the state level is that the regulations and the law address bias-based harassment and bullying spanning the spectrum from intolerant ridicule masked as jokes and derogatory language to relentless tormenting and physical violence. But even with such mandates, enforcement and support for victims after bullying occurs, more needs to be done toward prevention. Education and building awareness are critical to fully meet the need of everyone in the school community: It’s not purely about victims; it’s about all of us.

Our union, working with the UFT Teacher Center, is always on the front lines advocating for greater professional development to prepare teachers and school staff. We are especially pleased that as a consequence of the Dignity for All Act, all teachers and school-related professionals who apply for their state certificate on or after Jan. 1, 2014, must complete a six-hour course on prevention of and intervention in bullying, discrimination and harassment. The UFT is an authorized provider of this training.

In addition, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association created a program called Safe School Training. Offering a five-module workshop series, this program trains teachers to train their peers in ways to address LGBT issues in their schools. The workshops include: Taking A Stand—Creating Safe Schools for All Students; Walking the Talk—Classroom Strategies for Addressing Bias; Making the Case—Communications Strategies on GLBT Issues; Drawing Connections—Exploring Intersections of Gender, Race & Sexual Orientation; and Safe and Supportive Working Environments—A Must for All School Employees. We need more programs like these.

Building Alliances with LGBT Organizations

The DOE has a real opportunity to redouble its commitment to engaging school communities on these issues. There are many available resources, programs and opportunities to work in partnership, especially with parents and community organizations. The UFT partners with support and advocacy organizations such as Pride at Work and PFLAG (Parent and Friends of Lesbian and Gays). And we’ve recently met with the local chapter of the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) to explore ways in which we can work together to help make our schools a better and safer place for all to learn.

Initially, we launched the BRAVE campaign in collaboration with the DOE, the New York City Council, the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators and the office of the Brooklyn District Attorney, as well as other groups such as GLSEN, the New York Peace Initiative, Stand Up and Lead and MTV. To date, the UFT has hosted two annual BRAVE conferences and vendor fairs. Representatives from GLSEN presented workshops at each conference and participated in the fairs.

Changing Culture — There's More Work to Do

The UFT stands ready to work with the administration and the City Council in supporting the kinds of programs and services that we all know really help kids and families deal with bullying and harassment. For instance, programs that promote active peer mediation and conflict resolution and which work to prevent gang affiliation and substance abuse make a real difference.

We need to put forward approaches that help students identify underlying issues, increase self esteem, promote trust and problem solving and link students and families in need with resources at the school level and in the community.

Some school communities are tackling these issues head-on in their own ways. At PS/MS 278 in Washington Heights, the UFT chapter leader, Jim Tierney, together with the school principal, Maureen Guido, were honored with PFLAG's Safe Schools Leadership award in 2012 for improving their school's culture through the introduction of a No More Bullying Club and its successor, the Celebrating Diversity Club. Created to teach tolerance and combat the bullying of LGBT students in the school's middle grades, these clubs evolved from internal discussion groups to larger forums in which parents from PFLAG spoke about the struggles of their LGBT children and the toll bullying had taken on them and their families. Ultimately the clubs together with PFLAG produced an educational video that features students.

With the arrival of the new DOE administration, we look forward to open conversations about developing more professional development and required training that will help promote a culture of tolerance, respect and peace to benefit all members of our LGBT community and everyone in our schools.



Testimony of Kimberly Espinoza for the Education Committee
of the New York City Council-February 25, 2014

Good afternoon and thank you Councilmember Daniel Dromm and all the Council Members of the Education Committee for allowing me to testify today. My name is Kimberly Espinoza and I am a Junior at the Bushwick School for Social Justice (BSSJ) and a member of Make the Road New York. My journey to becoming a woman comfortable in herself, and accepting of others, first started in my freshman year when I joined the Queer Straight Alliance (QSA) club in my school. Coming from a family where being a part of the LGBTQ community isn't necessarily one of the best things, it was hard for me back then to realize how beneficial joining would be.

Now I am able to see how much progress we have made and lives we have touched in these past 3 years. Through Pride Week, workshops, fundraisers and meetings we've been able to accomplish a lot. We've worked , brought people together and created a safe space for all students at BSSJ. Every Pride Week I'm surprised at how many students are supportive. Without the support system from our teachers and principal I feel like we couldn't have done as much as we have. Being a part of the Coros Mayor's Youth Leadership Council and working around a policy that has to do with bullying, has made me realize that there is still more work to be done.

Unfortunately, not many schools are as open and willing to support their LGBTQ students. Important things such as Respect for All week are barely spoken of or marketed in

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many schools. Both students and teachers lack knowledge on how to tackle bullying and what it means to be a part of the LGBTQ community. I still feel like students, especially males don't feel comfortable enough to speak on their sexuality, and as much as we try to tackle this issue, it's still a big problem. I deeply believe school administrations have to be better informed on these issues so other students are able to be as comfortable as me to say that I will not give my sexuality a title and put myself in a box. What I will do, is say that I am only human and I love. I'm not afraid to love a man or woman, and each day I'm able to find more clarity about my sexuality and who I am as a person because of supportive teachers and clubs like the QSA. I can be more of who I am, and not just in school, but outside of it too.

Working with Make the Road NY, I know that my story is not common. Many schools don't really implement Respect for All or don't do it the way the policy is written. However, because there is no way of checking we don't know which schools are doing a great job and which need to improve. We need to audit all schools to make sure Respect for All is being implemented.

Lastly, because Make the Road NY works in many high schools, I know it is common for students not to know who their Respect for All point person is, and that many students not involved in QSAs know absolutely nothing about Respect for All. I know there are supportive principals out there, so I think part of the problem might be a lack of money. If schools are going to do a good job of putting Respect for All in place they need enough resources and lots of great training_for both teachers and also students.

I know we have come far in just a few years but I also know the work isn't over. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify.



**TESTIMONY BY EDUARDO FLORES BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF
THE NYC COUNCIL
February 25, 2014**

Good afternoon and thank you to Council Member Dromm and all the members of the Education Committee for allowing me to testify today . My name is Eduardo Flores. I am 19 years of age and am a resident of Sunnyside Queens and member of New York Road New York (MRNY) Make the Road NY is one of the largest immigrant rights organization in the state of New York--it also has an LGBTQ Justice Project, of which I am part .

For 3 years I went to school at Newcommers High School in Long Island City, Queens. I liked my teachers and was motivated to get good grades and succeed. I even started, with the help of Make the Road New York, to think of a plan to create safe spaces for lesbian and gay people in my school , as part of my leadership development. However, when I presented these ideas, again and again I ran into obstacles from the school principal , who in front of organizers of Make the Road New York said this type of space was not necessary and it would be very controversial for the immigrant parents who are involved with the school.

At the same time that this was happening, I also began to receive threats and harassment by my peers because of my sexuality and gender expression. I began to be absent from my classes and my grades began to get worse and I became very depressed. When I reported this to my counselor, he told me I had to come to school no matter what. But, how can I go to a place where every day they made fun of me and where even at one point, I received a written death threat --- and the teachers and counselors did nothing? I went with my mom and organizers of Make the Road New York to confront the problem with the principal and my counselor , however they said the problem was my absences and my bad grades . I could not believe the lack of support, when it is clear and proven that students who are bullied at school do not want to come to school if staff are not doing anything about it.

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I ended up asking them to transfer me to another school. They wanted me to transfer to Harvey Milk School, but as an immigrant student I wanted to go to a school where they specialized in teaching English. I was sent to another school in Queens, but they were not accepting people at that time . I became very frustrated and ended up deciding to take the GED instead of continuing to apply for schools. Now I 'm finally getting my life in order with the help of allies from Make the Road NY . Im about to take my GED and I 'm applying for scholarships and college.

But I do not want this to happen to any other student in the public education system of the City of New York. So I ask the City Council to have mandatory training for students through their Respect for All Regulation , and to further expand the Regulation to include harassment by teachers and other employees. I think what happened in Newcommers was lack of training and sensitivity - and we need this especially in schools that deal with immigrant populations.

Finally, I ask the city council to approve a curriculum that includes LGBTQ topics, so that all students in the public education system in the city of New York learn of the rich history and contributions that the LGBTQ community have made. I appreciate your time today and I and my fellow Make the Road NY organizers and students are willing to keep fighting and helping to make these demands become a reality.

Thank you very much !



HETRICK-MARTIN INSTITUTE

The Treatment of LGBT Students, Family and Staff in the New York City Public School System.

Testimony by Thomas Krever, CEO

I want to thank you Councilmember Dromm and the committee members for the opportunity today to speak on this most important issue – the treatment of LGBT students, family and staff in the New York City public school system. While I, along with my fellow colleagues and advocates, will undoubtedly share with you a series of incidents that demand all here to heed and take decisive and swift action upon, I also feel obligated to share some high-level issues that I feel must be addressed if we are to build a safe school environment for all of our students – a school environment that is inclusive of all of its young people and their families – regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Rather than hypothesizing as to the reasons why this spate of hate, the resulting violence, and its most tragic outcome – death – has afflicted our most vulnerable of populations, LGBT youth, I feel it is more important to share with you the effects these horrors are having upon our youth population – effects we witness every day at the Hetrick-Martin Institute. But it would also be but half the story if I could not offer some solutions here today as well.

I am Thomas Krever, CEO of Hetrick-Martin Institute, the nation's oldest and largest LGBTQ youth service organization, which serves more than 2,000 youth from all five boroughs of New York City and beyond. I also serve on the LGBTQ Liaison Panel to the New York City Police Department and conduct trainings in both New York City and across the country on creating safer environments for LGBTQ youth. I have also had the good fortune of working in partnership with and for the New York City Department of Education for over 12 years as a gang intervention expert, and I can honestly say in my over two decades of youth work that I thought in doing that work I had met the most disconnected young people in our city's and nation's school systems. However, walking through the doors of the Hetrick-Martin Institute nearly 13 years ago was a sobering wake up call to the challenges faced by what I now understand to be our nation's most disconnected young people.

Today, I am here not to discuss the special needs of LGBTQ young people in the New York City school system – for in fact these young people have no more special needs than any other young person served by the education system – a sense of belonging; of being a part of an environment that is emotionally and physically safe for them – but rather I want to address the special challenges that LGBTQ young people face – challenges that for these young people are indeed quite unique.

This population of young people and their families remain widely underserved and disproportionately afflicted by physical and emotional stressors (bullying, harassment, etc.) with devastating effects that are well-documented. Having an identity that is often looked upon with disdain and lacking in representation in curricula and other materials, role models and other societal “basics” many heterosexuals experience as “common place,” LGBTQ young people very often experience self-contempt with regard to their orientation and self-identity. At the Hetrick-Martin Institute, the rates of depression and suicide ideation among



our youth sadly reflects this reality. According to national statistics, LGBTQ youth suffer rates of depression and suicide ideation three to six times greater than their heterosexual peers; and frequently hear derogatory remarks such as “faggot” or “dyke” at school. Additionally, a leading cause for homelessness amongst young people other than poverty is the direct result of their revealing their sexual orientation or gender identity, and according to the CDC, adolescent men between the ages of 13 and 19 who are black and Latino are three times more likely to contract HIV, the virus that leads to AIDS. Sadly NYC remains the epicenter of this affliction.

And yet despite these bleak statistics, I am here to offer our lessons learned as a glimmer of hope – a light shone on what can be. I would like to draw your attention to five elements that we at HMI feel would help to create a safer environment for LGBT students, thus improving the treatment of them and their families within the New York City public school system. By creating policies that infuse these tenets and then carefully monitoring their accountability and evaluating their success, we will be able to create systemic changes for the betterment of all New York City students as well as their families.

I begin first with the element of **Professional Development** for any system is only as effective as the individuals that implement it. Staff that have a basic understanding of the challenges affecting LGBTQ youth and how best to serve them – through case management; how to connect these youth and their families to social services; and understanding the mental health and medical challenges of these young people. Training must be provided to those that serve our young people as well as their families by experts in the field of LGBTQ adolescent development.

The second element is **Environmental Design** whereby we ensure that the facilities young people and their families frequent are truly welcoming, hospitable and inclusive places. Facilities must be properly prepared for the work that you do and you must examine the effects that the environment has on the young people and families that you serve. For example, reducing the anonymity in your space builds community by increasing opportunities for communication as appropriate and creating ownership of the space by the students and families. For a population that historically has gone unheard and not had “a place at the table,” creating a psychologically affirming and openly supportive environment and culture of space is an incredibly powerful tool. For example... before we ask young people to “come out,” we must ask ourselves if the space is “safe” for adults themselves to come out and serve as role models?

Third, I would like to focus on the Policies and Procedures – the codification of how we do business that allows all processes to run smoothly. All members of the school community need a common source of information – a place where they can go to “learn the facts” and the “way things are done” and to see - written out clearly - the expectations and systems of accountability that they and their fellow community members will be held accountable to. It is imperative that everyone involved knows and understands the common standards that bind them together with other members of their community.

The next area I want to note is **Program Design and Instructional Support**. We must ensure that an inclusive environment extends well into the curriculum and programs taught within the school. Programs and curricula should invite conversation and include



perspectives of all young people, including LGBT youth. Curricula must be culturally competent, and we must educate teachers and administrators on issues such as employing inclusive language; confronting negative language, messaging and environments that marginalize particular clients or subpopulations served within their community; as well as celebrating successes in diversity and acknowledging accomplishments. There also must be space to admit shortcomings and then use such occurrences as opportunities to improve, grow and be more inclusive. Finally, there must be premeditated, clearly designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated plans to assess safety. Any school or organizational surveys must be given to ALL community members (trainers, teachers, school safety, custodial staff, students, administrators, local merchants, etc.) in order that all voices are heard.

Finally, as we embrace the new millennium, the last area I would like to draw our attention to is the technological aspect of building a community. While social media can be a powerful tool that can unite once isolated young people and their families and connect them to resources across great distances, we must also recognize – and be prepared to address – the challenges that are faced when technology is used in negative ways, such as cyber bullying. The world is rapidly advancing – we must ensure this progression includes all families.

I applaud the current initiatives such as the Dignity for All Student Act (DASA); the Respect for All initiative within the New York City schools system; and the more recent school safety agent revised curriculum which I myself have helped to create. However, what continues to remain unresolved are the monitoring and evaluation procedures that will go hand-in-hand with these initiatives. On a more systemic level, there seems to be a haunting lack of clarity around school safety agents their accountability and to whom they report. It is important to note, my experiences during the time of curriculum revision and expansion was one of true collaboration and openness – I would strongly encourage this process to be supported and expanded within the new administration. I would also suggest that all of these measures and more must be placed under the purview of an individual/department that would oversee and monitor the progress made with LGBTQ and other disparaged groups to ensure their inclusion into the overall framework of our city school system. If it already exists, then I would encourage a more effective way to communicate this and enlist stakeholders within what I am sure is good work already happening...

I believe that progress can be made and, in fact, have witnessed much of it so far. But I also recognize that there is still so much more work to be done to create a system that takes into account these five tenets as well as ensuring that whatever systems are created are given the support – both fiscally as well as administratively – to ensure that they can achieve their mission and purpose of building inclusive school communities for LGBT young people and their families. We at Hetrick-Martin Institute remain at your service to assist in creating this more inclusive world.



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NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Oversight Hearing: The Treatment of LGBT students, family and
staff in the NYC public school system.
February 25, 2014

ELIZABETHE PAYNE, PHD
QuERI Director
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About QuERI

The Queering Education Research Institute® is an independent think-tank, qualitative research and training center founded in 2006 and housed in the Syracuse University School of Education. The purpose of the Queering Education Research Institute (QuERI) is to bridge the gap between research and practice in the teaching of LGBTQ students and the creation of LGBTQ youth-affirming schools.

QuERI strives to foster change for LGBTQ youth and families through:

- Conducting qualitative research studies exploring the Education experiences of LGBTQ youth, the children of LGBTQ families, the experiences of their teachers and other school personnel.
- Developing research-based professional development programs for school professionals.
- Providing pre-service teachers unique coursework on LGBTQ Issues in Education.
- Evaluating school policy and policy implementation and proposing new policy to improve school climate.
- Making research on LGBTQ issues in Education accessible through various publications, conference presentation, and workshop delivery.
- Challenging the current understanding of “bullying” and proposing new approaches.
- Working at the state level on Education law and policy.
- Providing opportunities for graduate students, the future teacher-educators, to engage with LGBTQ young people, and to research and teach in the area of queering education.
- Working with LGBTQA students in local schools to support their participation in creating positive change in their schools.

Bio: Elizabeth C. Payne, PhD, is Director of The Queering Education Research Institute and an associate professor of Education, part-time, at Syracuse University School of Education. She is a sociologist of education with specializations in research methods, bullying, youth culture, and LGBTQ issues in education. Her current research projects explore education professionals’ experiences working with transgender elementary school students, and the effectiveness of LGBTQ professional development for educators. She teaches education coursework on LGBTQ student bullying. Dr. Payne served on the New York State Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) Task Force, the Dignity for All Students Act State Policy Group, and the Pre-service Certification Group. She was a high school English teacher in Houston, Texas before returning to graduate school for her doctoral work.

Introduction

In the past few years, LGBTQ* student bullying as a social phenomenon has gained greater visibility and become a part of public consciousness as a problem demanding immediate attention. However, the problem is more complex than often portrayed in the culture-at-large and our redress of the problem needs to increase in complexity as well (Payne & Smith, 2013). The “problem” of LGBTQ students’ negative school experiences has been shaped by a discourse of bullying that focuses on the individual psychological characteristics of bullies and victims (Ringrose 2008, p.501) and neglects research that examines issues of hostile school culture; the

attitudes and training of school professionals; the social dynamics of young people's peer groups (Payne & Smith, 2013); and the ways implementation of state anti-bullying legislation has failed to give districts and schools the needed tools for success (Payne & Smith, 2012). Unfortunately, LGBTQ student marginalization is often understood solely in terms of homophobic and transphobic language and aggression (DePalma & Jennett, 2010). Reducing harm through consistently intervening in anti-LGBTQ language is critical for the well-being of LGBTQ students, but that alone does not "solve" the problem of LGBTQ youth being stigmatized in school environments. We must think more complexly about what we can and should do to address it and seek long term sustainable change (Payne & Smith, 2013). In this testimony, I will briefly present both research on the larger picture of LGBTQ youth experiences in schools nationally and in the state of New York, as well as consideration of the issues at play in their continued marginalization.

LGBTQ Youth in Schools

Research consistently confirms that LGBTQ students experience fear, harassment, social isolation, discrimination, and physical violence on a daily basis (Adelman & Woods, 2006) for their failure to conform to the norms of heterosexuality and gender in the U.S. high school. Using the standards for normative gender to identify potential targets, adolescents "hunt" for and mark students who are seen as gender and sexual deviants as a way to both publicly claim their own normative gender and sexuality and to marginalize the difference of others (Smith, 1998). This "anti-LGBTQ environment sends an explicit message that those who are considered different or non-conforming constitute acceptable targets of bullying and harassment or simply do not belong in school" (Adelman & Woods, 2006, p. 8). Educator intervention is, at best,

inconsistent, and “students learn from experience that adult support or intervention may not be forthcoming” (p. 18).

Language is a powerful and ubiquitous weapon for targeting and policing gender and sexual non-conformity. Hate speech produces a social, not just an individual, effect. Through the hate speech act — “faggot,” “dyke,” “homo,” —both the individual targeted and the larger group of gender and sexual non-conforming students are positioned and as un-deserving of respect within the peer social hierarchy of school. The “injury” experienced occurs in the verbal abuse itself and in the social positioning that is its product. The aggressor places the target in a weaker or “subordinate” social position (McInnes & Couch, 2004, pp. 435-436) and in doing so, re-establishes that students who do not conform to traditional expectations for gender belong at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Therefore, any student who also has the targeted characteristic— i.e. who is gay or also embodies non-conforming gender expression—is also subject to the effects of this aggression because the message that LGBTQ students are “subordinate” or “easy targets” will continue to circulate throughout the school environment. This social positioning “through hate speech turns” LGBTQ students away from “communion, communication, and belonging” in the school environment (p. 436). Those targeted in school are at higher risk for dropping out of school and poor academic performance (Wilkinson & Pearson, 2009).

It is important to recognize that youth are not necessarily explicitly targeting those who identify as LGBTQ for harassment and marginalization. Accusations of homosexuality are used, to “police all aspects of behaviour” (p. 404) that challenge traditional gender, relying on the cultural relationship between traditional gender conformity and heterosexuality (Payne, 2007). Boys who are small in size, studious, seen as “nerdy,” girls who compete in sports or are

uninterested in boys all can be labeled as “gay.” This peer regulation restricts how all students are “allowed” to operate in their school environments, to learn and succeed.

The strict regulation of difference produces a school climate in which sexual and gender minority youth (and those perceived to be) are at risk for marginalization, exclusion, violence and harassment. Schools have potential to be inclusive spaces for LGBTQ youth and families, but until educators are better able to understand the effects of a heterosexist culture on all members of a school community (Sherwin & Jennings, 2006), these patterns will continue.

School Professionals and LGBTQ Students

Pre-service Preparation to Support LGBTQ Students

Research has noted that “negative attitudes toward LGBT people are prevalent among pre-service and licensed teachers” (Macgillivray & Jennings, 2008, p. 170). With LGBT topics in teacher preparation receiving less attention than other areas of diversity, or ignored all together (Athanases & Larrabee, 2003; Macgillivray & Jennings, 2008; Sherwin and Jennings, 2006), few opportunities are provided to teachers to consider how their negative attitudes impact *all* their students (Payne & Smith, 2012). LGBTQ people comprise a significant minority within the US population, cutting across ethnic, racial, cultural, ability, and language groups, yet in one study (Sherwin & Jennings, 2006), seventy-two percent of teacher programs in the US ranked sexual orientation as either their lowest or an absent priority in diversity curricula. In the programs that did provide instruction on LGBTQ issues, the address was brief when compared to preparation to support other marginalized student populations (Sherwin & Jennings, 2006). Analysis of existing diversity course content indicates that pre-service teachers are being given few tools to create affirming learning environments for LGBTQ youth.

There is a great deal of variation in whether and in how teacher education in the State of New York prepares future educators to support LGBT students, but there are a limited number of textbooks utilized in courses aimed at teaching prospective teachers about diversity. Examination of these textbooks has found that many exclude LGBT content altogether, or if included, it reinforced “negative or stereotypical representations” (MacGillivray & Jennings, 2008, p. 171). LGBT identities were often framed as pathologies— included in text sections on suicide, depression, or sexually transmitted disease. LGBT lives and relationships were measured against the “norm” or standard of heterosexual relationships, and LGBTQ people were presented as predominantly white and monolithic. LGBTQ students were portrayed as “hapless” victims and described as “outcasts” (p. 180) in need of protection.

Education students need to be challenged beyond their “comfort zone in exploring diversity issues” and teacher education programs need to create opportunities for pre-service teachers to reflect on their biases and develop a sense of professional responsibility toward LGBTQ students (Athanasas & Martin, 2006, p. 642).

Educator In-service Professional Development on LGBT Issues:

Many teachers enter into schools not only unprepared to meet the needs of LGBTQ students, but unaware that the needs exist. Research suggests that in-service training is associated with increased knowledge, more positive teacher attitudes towards LGBT students and improved school climate (Kose, 2009; Szalacha, 2004) but teachers in the US report few opportunities offered through their schools or districts to gain competence in addressing the needs of LGBTQ students (Meyer, 2008).

Studies show that without staff development, teacher responses to school policies in support of LGBT students and understanding of their obligation to enforcement of these policies

varies based upon their own personal history and beliefs (Anagnostopoulos et al, 2009). While staff members may be motivated to intervene and educate when they encounter incidents of overt male to female sexual harassment, research has revealed that there is “considerable uncertainty” about their obligations to LGBT students who are targets of gender and sexual bullying (p. 522), and they often positioned gay students as responsible for being harassed by “putting” themselves in vulnerable situations or drawing negative attention through their gender, dress and mannerisms. Without training and specific guidance, school staff are not able to see the connections between sexual harassment, gender-based bullying, and the “norms, roles, and practices” of the school and peer culture “through which gender-based bullying operates” (p.522) and marginalizes LGBTQ students. The existing research demonstrates a need to explicitly include LGBTQ students in school policy and to specifically train educators through sound professional development on their role in implementing school policy, and provide them the skills to do so (Payne & Smith, 2011).

While inclusive anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies are becoming more common, State Boards of Education and School Districts that include sexual orientation and gender identity in their student anti-harassment policies do *not* commonly require professional development on the needs of LGBT students to support compliance, and there are not clear expectations stated for trainings that do occur as to the content, duration or delivery of those staff trainings (Szalacha, 2003; CSSC, 2005; Payne & Smith, 2011). Furthermore, many of professional development programs that are available are not designed by education professionals, are not rooted in educational research, have not been evaluated through actual research, and have not published detailed information about program format, rationale, or content (Payne & Smith, 2011).

With little or no preparation during their pre-service programs (Athanasas & Larrabee, 2003; Macgillivray & Jennings, 2008; Sherwin and Jennings, 2006; Payne & Smith, 2014) and with little opportunity for professional development, it is not surprising that research persistently suggests that educators have a more difficult time addressing homophobia and heterosexism than other forms of harassment, prejudice or discrimination, and that this is the area of school diversity teachers feel least prepared to address. Lack of adult intervention in student anti-LGBTQ remarks implies passive agreement with those remarks and is one of the most common ways that educators participate in maintaining a hostile school environment (Adelman & Woods, 2006; Macgillivray, 2000; van Wormer & McKinney, 2003). Research also has established that supportive school staff members can make a difference in the lives of LGBTQ youth and are critical in creating supportive school environments (Anagnostopoulos et. al, 2009). It is imperative that we provide our school professionals with high quality pre-service and in-service training and support if we are to see any real change in schools.

School Culture:

While the dominant understanding of LGBTQ student bullying fails to acknowledge the social systems of power that support acts of bullying targeted at LGBTQ and gender non-conforming students, overt acts of violence against LGBTQ youth (or those who are perceived to be) are only the surface-level, explicit effects of school cultures that privilege heterosexuality and traditional gender and create social benefits for peer-to-peer policing of non-normative sexualities and gender expressions (Payne, 2007). Those who step outside the norm are “policed by their peers and denied access to social power and popularity, while those who do conform are “celebrated” (Payne & Smith 2012a, p. 88). We must come to understand the “problem” of LGBTQ student bullying differently if we are to have different outcomes in our intervention

efforts. We must come to understand in-school aggression as a social phenomenon that finds its purpose in students' battles for social power. Anti-bullying interventions are not designed to do such complex work. Rather, anti-bullying interventions are designed merely to manage behaviors, not disrupt cultural patterns of power, privileging and marginalization.

Understanding Bullying as Gender Policing – from Payne & Smith, 2013

The majority of bullying research has been “gender blind” (Ringrose & Renold 2010, 576) – failing to look at the cultural context of bullying and the ways in which many bullying behaviors are rooted in reinforcing the “rules” for appropriate gender. Bullying behaviors are not anti-social but rather highly social acts deeply entrenched in the perpetuation of cultural norms and values – significantly those norms that require a fixed relationship between traditional gender, sex and sexuality and the maintaining of “gender coherence” – not blurring lines between what is considered “masculine” and “feminine” (Ringrose & Renold 2010, p. 577).

Every student's speech, behavior, dress, etc. are always being regulated by the cultural rules about the “right” way to exist in the school environment, and youth's everyday gender policing practices often fail to draw adults' attention because these behaviors largely align with the institutional values of school. Young people's attitudes about difference are partially formed in a school-based social scene that rewards conformity. Youth regularly regulate and discipline the boundaries between “normal” and “different” along the lines of sex, gender, and sexuality (and their intersections with race, class, ability) and this process is a mechanism for acquiring and increasing social status (Payne & Smith, 2013).

These patterns of aggression occur constantly throughout the school, producing and reproducing systems of value based on gender conformity, though often at lower levels of visible violence than that deemed “bullying” and they often occur *within* friendship groups (Ringrose

2008), making it all the more difficult to see and to intervene. Boys' regular misogynistic teasing and sexual harassment of girls, girls' verbal policing of one another's appearance and sexual reputations, and boys' frequent homophobic teasing are examples of verbal aggression that constantly circulate within peer groups, police the boundaries of acceptable gender, but fall outside dominant discourses of bullying (Duncan 2004; Ringrose & Renold 2010; Payne, 2009; 2010; Payne & Smith 2012a; Youdell, 2005).

Additionally, some forms of aggression are considered "normal" based on cultural expectations for gendered behavior, for example, "for boys to be heroically and 'playfully' violent and for girls to be repressively and secretly 'mean'" (Ringrose & Renold 2010, p.591). Youth operate within these acceptable dynamics of aggression to battle for position in social hierarchies without (much) adult scrutiny, reproducing gender norms including those for "relational aggression" (Ringrose & Renold 2010, p.586). Students who are socially powerful are those who are considered heterosexually attractive for their gender and demonstrate their ability to attract attention, acquire dating opportunities, and develop relationships with the "opposite" sex (Eckert, 1997). Those who most successfully conform to gender expectations are "celebrated" (Lugg, 2006, p.49) not only by their peers, but by their school.

Patterns of targeting indicate that youths' understanding (and marking) of their LGBTQ and gender non-conforming peers is not "based solely on sexual orientation, but rather from judgments about perceived tendencies to engage in forms of expression that run counter to gender conventions" (Horn, 2007, p.329). This means that the further youth fall from idealized forms of masculinity and femininity, the more vulnerable they are to these patterns of heightened policing as well as more severe forms of violence. LGBTQ youth are often the most vulnerable in this system.

Again: Hate speech acts—“faggot,” “dyke,” “homo,” “slut”—“injure” individuals *and* the larger group of queer and non-conforming students by repeatedly placing them in “subordinate position[s]” in the social hierarchy (McInnes & Couch 2004, p.435) and publicly reaffirming the associated gender transgressions as deviant. However, it is only the students who are overtly, publicly, repeatedly targeted who are framed within dominant bullying discourses as the victims of bullying.

Because these escalated verbal acts of aggression draw from the same cultural system of meaning and practice as everyday gender policing and sexual harassment—which is a normalized part of social life— they are not viewed as abnormal by youth. It is, therefore, possible that those who “bully” do so because they are making an “extreme investment” in a cultural system that allows them to access power through the “normative regulation of others” (Bansel et al 2009, 67). In other words, the violence termed “bullying” is merely the heightened and visible form of aggression that circulates every day in schools and in the larger culture – aggression that targets appearance, personal interests and hobbies, academic engagement, bodily comportment, physical size and shape, sexual behavior in ways that continuously reassert the “right” way to be a gendered person and affirm the expected alignment of sex, gender and sexuality.

Connelly (2012) notes that high school is “one of the most intensely and often violently anti-gay sites in our culture” (p. 254). Targeting others for their failure to “do” gender “right” is a learned mechanism for improving or affirming one’s *own* social status as well as re-affirming the “rightness” of the gender “rules,” and schools are participants in both teaching youth to use these tools and in privileging some groups of (conforming) kids over others. It is, therefore, important to examine the multiple ways in which schools institutionalize heterosexuality and silence and marginalize gender and sexual difference, thus supporting social positioning

practices that privilege idealized heterosexuality— from social rituals like prom, to elections of school queens and kings, to awards for “cutest couple,” to the heterocentric curriculum, to school dress codes that affirm the gender binary, etc. Heterosexuality and gender conformity are rewarded with a position at the top of the school’s social hierarchy—visibly reaffirming the school ideal (Payne and Smith 2012a) often through the awarding of crowns!

Bullying is not anti-social behavior, but rather is both intensely social and functional behavior rooted in the school and larger cultural systems of value. It serves a “social purpose by reinforcing hierarchies of power and privilege” and is “a reflection of broader social inequity and prejudice” (Walton, 2011, p.140) and schools perpetuate this. Schools need to examine the discrepancy between their school missions and the visibility, reward and value system present in the school. It is possible to begin to change school culture through small acts which demonstrate that students are not valued solely based upon their gender conformity. Some of these include:

- A proactive plan for creating a positive school culture that looks beyond eliminating overt acts of violence and addresses the school's roles in systemically marginalizing some students while privileging others.
- A school plan to explore possibilities for elevating prestige and community visibility given to academics and the arts, thus increasing the tangible value the school community places on students who excel in these areas.
- Inclusive curriculum that represent the contributions of LGBTQ people in all areas of study.
- A commitment to incorporate images of gender diversity and different family structures including LGBTQ families in the posters, brochures, bulletin boards, and other sites of visual representation in the school.
- Reviewing student visibility in publications such as yearbooks and newsletters, daily announcements, and other school representation to assure that a diversity of students are seen as valued. For example, in many schools, the majority of professional photos in the yearbook are of the athletes and homecoming court, and is the science club relegated to one photo in the back of the book.

The New York State Dignity for All Students Act

QuERI has played several significant roles in the implementation of DASA. First, the Institute has been an active member of the DASA Task Force since its inception. This work has included participating in state-level implementation decisions, drafting guidance documents, and fighting for meaningful pre-service requirements.

Second, since 2012 QuERI has provided professional development on DASA implementation throughout Central New York. Through that work, we have communicated with educators from administrators to classroom teachers to learn about school districts' interpretations of DASA and strategies for implementation. Our experience on the Task Force and in schools has allowed for observations of the discrepancies between legislation and legislative intent, actual state education policy, and on-the-ground practice, including the inconsistent or delayed implementation of core DASA components-- such as appointing DASA coordinators or updating Codes of Conduct-- and the lack of communication between schools and families about state and local efforts to make schools safer and more inclusive. The vulnerability of LGBTQ students and families has been apparent in these anecdotal experiences: state policy makers have resisted endorsing specific directives for meeting the needs of LGBTQ students and families, which has all but eliminated schools' incentive to directly address issues of sexual and gender diversity in their efforts to implement DASA.

Our research and applied work in Central New York schools has provided opportunity for us to hear the experiences of educators who are working to successfully implement DASA in their schools and districts. Overall, these educators feel they have not been given adequate resources or information to implement the law in a way that focuses both on violence intervention and designing preventative interventions that focus on creating a more inclusive

school culture. As a result, schools are focusing solely on logistical matters: naming all protected classes in policy, informing the community about violence reporting procedures and revising their investigation processes. Translating this written policy into practice has had limited success because NYSED's DASA implementation and professional development guidance do not require significant information about recognizing, investigating, or resolving bias-based incidents of peer-to-peer aggression. This is a significant problem for LGBTQ students because these students are typically targeted because of cultural bias against their failure to conform to strict gender and sexual norms. Such bias is reinforced in school cultures that reward heterosexuality and gender conformity. This means that effective intervention requires immediate action to stop violence and school-wide efforts to disrupt the stigmatization of LGBTQ identities.

Effectively addressing the issue of LGBTQ bias in schools requires a critical mass of knowledgeable educators who are able to assess what gender and sexuality biased-based harassment is, how their schools privilege heterosexuality and gender normativity, and propose strategies for fostering more inclusive cultural values, as well as competence in intervention in the daily harassment experienced by LGBTQ students. This content was not ultimately included in the guidance for professional development issued by NYSED, nor in the new requirements for what pre-service educators are to learn prior to certification in their brief DASA training session. These are missed opportunities for increasing the capacity for New York schools to disrupt patterns of gender-based harassment and to become safe environments for LGBTQ students and families.

In order to ensure that knowledgeable educators are present in every school, it is imperative that educator training in support of LGBTQ students include (1) in-depth information on the law and policy; (2) focused training on how to accurately recognize and report bias-based

aggression; (3) teach educators about the experiences of LGBTQ students and families and about how and why they are effected by school-based violence and stigma, preparing them to proactively create affirming environments, not simply react to hostile situations.

LGBTQ-specific curriculum should include:

- LGBTQ youth experiences of social stigma and risk
- Understanding Gender/Sexuality-based Bullying and Harassment
- Best Practice for LGBTQ-inclusive policies, procedures, and curriculum

A Few Recommendations for Improving the Experiences of LGBTQ Students & Families

- Dedicate time and resources to providing school professionals with high quality professional development on LGBTQ students needs.
 - Focus Professional development and staff expectations not just on consistent intervention, but on proactively creating affirming environments.
- Support the implementation of meaningful university pre-service requirements on the needs of LGBTQ students for future teachers in New York State.
- Encourage schools to conduct self-assessments examining their school culture:
 - What images of families are in school publications, newsletters, library books, on classroom bulletin boards?
 - Do school forms require information from “Mother” and “Father”?
 - Which students are the most visible in the institutionalized school culture and why? Who is not represented?
 - Are the arts and academics receiving the same levels of praise and visibility in the school as athletics and school dances?
 - Are there awards in the school that are really about heterosexual conformity and attractiveness? How can that be expanded to include all students?
- Encourage schools to conduct self-assessments examining:
 - The consistent inclusion of LGBT students and families in all school policies.
 - The distribution of school policy to staff, parents and students.
 - The awareness of school staff about school policy content.
 - The expectations staff feel to enforce school policy in regards to LGBT students.
 - And the clarity of reporting procedures and action steps for bias intervention.

* QuERI uses "LGBTQ" to include queer and "unnamed" non-normative and fluid identities expressed by many youth. "LGBT" is used when referencing specific works, discourses, law or policy that use that acronym.

This testimony is based upon the research and publications of the Queering Education Research Institute. Links to these publications are available at www.queeringeducation.org.

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FOR THE RECORD

Testimony of Julian Padilla before the Education Committee of the New York City Council-February 25, 2014

Good afternoon and thank you Councilmember Daniel Dromm and all the Council Members of the Education Committee for allowing me to testify today. My name is Julian Padilla and I taught first and second grade for three years in Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn before becoming the GLOBE/LGBTQ Justice Project organizer for Make the Road NY.

During my time as a teacher I never once heard of Respect for All week. I never saw posters, was informed of a point person, or received specific RFA training. I vaguely remember being given brochures to send home but I am certain we didn't dedicate a week to teaching respect for LGBTQ communities and other groups who have historically been targets of bullying and violence. As an out Queer teacher, it was important to me that students did learn about LGBTQ families and that bullying students for their gender expression was not acceptable. I initiated a Social Justice Curriculum Committee and led the creation of school wide lesson plans, which were taught in grades K-4. Some teachers had apprehensions about explaining to students that some boys like things associated with girls, from clothes to toys, and vice versa for girls.

What we learned as teachers was that students were much more aware of these issues than we initially expected. Students were able and, moreover, ready to identify and challenge rigid gender roles in fairy tales, advertisements, and from other peers. By explicitly teaching respect for people regardless of family structure and gender expression, we created a school

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culture in which it was not cool to pick on students and in which peer interventions became the norm. I know firsthand the power youth have when they are given the tools and support to act critically and compassionately.

The curriculum I helped develop was only implemented for one semester before it was dropped. If the Respect for All regulation were being properly implemented, it wouldn't have been necessary in the first place. We know that in fact it is still not being implemented because in 2013, Make the Road NY and the New York Civil Liberties Union surveyed students across NYC and asked the question "Do you know who your Respect for All/DASA coordinator is?" Of 409 students, only 60 knew, which is less than 15%! Not only is it troubling that the City can pass a regulation that our school system largely ignores, the true loss comes in the form of the LGBTQ students who feel their only option is to drop out of school, or worse to hurt and even kill themselves, because of bullying.

Therefore, Make the Road New York would like to aid the City in creating LGBTQ-specific curriculum and work with the Department of Education in any capacity to ensure the proper implementation of Respect for All. We also recommend the following-

With Regards to Chancellor's Regulation A-832 (also known as the Respect for All Regulation):

(1) The DOE must fully realize Chancellor's Regulation A-832 and allocate adequate resources to enable full implementation. At a minimum, the DOE should provide more frequent and better training. Pursuant to A-832's directive, all schools must appoint a Respect for All liaison, ensure that both staff and students are aware of A-832's mandate at the start of the school year, conspicuously post Respect for All posters, and distribute Respect for All brochures to all parents and students annually. School staff can only help targets of bullying and other students if they are well trained about A-832, aware of their school's Respect for All point person, and otherwise kept abreast of school efforts to comply with the regulation.

(2) We also recommend an audit process for the DOE to learn which schools have model implementation programs and which schools have room to improve. This will allow the DOE to better guide non-compliant schools to improve their programs.

(3) The DOE must bring Chancellor's Regulation A-832 into compliance with the New York State Dignity for All Students Act (the Dignity Act) by prohibiting staff-to-student bullying and

expanding public reporting requirements. New York State's Dignity Act sets forth a two-year timeline for its implementation, requiring all school districts and the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to be in full compliance with its mandate by the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year. Chancellor's Regulation A-832 moves toward compliance with the statewide anti-bullying law and sets a strong model for other school districts in the state. However, it falls short in some important ways. The Dignity Act goes further than A-832 in two vital areas:

- **Prohibiting bullying by school employees:** Currently, Chancellor's Regulation A-832 addresses only student-on-student harassment. To comply with the state Dignity Act, the Chancellor's Regulation must extend protection to harassment by adult staff members – including School Safety Officers (SSO's).
- **Public reporting mandate:** The Dignity Act requires reporting of "material incidents" to the state. While Chancellor's Regulation A-832 does not require public reporting, the DOE occasionally reports a certain amount of aggregated data about bias-based harassment on a voluntary basis. At a minimum, the Chancellor's Regulation must explicitly provide for public reporting of material incidents to comply with the Dignity Act. However, in the interest of transparency and public accountability, the Chancellor's Regulation should go even further to make public, on a yearly basis, incidents and statistics of bias-based harassment, broken down by borough and district.



Rabbi Marvin Hier
Founder and Dean

Simon Wiesenthal Center New York City Council Testimony for Education Committee

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Brian Roberts

You are probably wondering why a mainstream Orthodox Jewish Rabbi has made it his business today to appear before you to discuss the treatment of LGBT students, family and staff in the New York City Public School System. The answer is quite simple – because there is nothing more important than fighting bigotry and discrimination in all of its forms and facets.

My name is Rabbi Steven Burg and I have the distinct privilege of serving as the Eastern Director of The Simon Wiesenthal Center and its Educational arm The Museum of Tolerance. The Museum challenges visitors to confront bigotry and racism, and to understand the Holocaust in both historic and contemporary contexts. Through interactive workshops, exhibits, and video's, individuals explore issues of prejudice, diversity, tolerance and cooperation in the workplace, the classroom, and the community at large.

When Simon Wiesenthal was first approached over 30 years ago to lend his name to the center he insisted on a specific condition, that the center would not be a museum of artifacts and remembrance of those peoples who have been oppressed, rather it would serve as an activist institution committed to reminding future generations of the dangers of a society filled with hate.

Not too long ago, I had the pleasure of giving a tour of the Museum of Tolerance to, and speaking with, a senior member of the NYPD. I asked him during our conversation what he believed to be the single largest issue facing our city today. He didn't answer terrorism, he didn't say addiction to drugs, he unequivocally, and most insistently answered bullying.

When most of us here were growing up at least bullying ended with the ring of the school dismissal bell. That is certainly no longer the case. With the advent of cyber bullying our children and their families have to endure bigoted attacks twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

In our New York Museum of Tolerance, where we serve over 15,000 school children annually, mostly from the New York City Public School System, we have developed award winning seminars for all ages, teaching not only that bullying is bad, but demonstrating the effects felt by its recipients. In our point of view diner seminar room, a room specifically

designed to provide a comfortable and friendly setting to students, we have interactive multimedia demonstrations which are specifically geared to showing what goes on inside the heads of those that are bullied, and how easily those in the LGBT community become their peers most sought after and most harshly treated targets.

Many members of the council have come through our center over the past several months, and we were happy to host a new council members event this past month to once again demonstrate that bullying in all its forms must be prevented to the best of our ability.

Why is a mainstream Orthodox Jewish Rabbi here today to talk about protecting the LGBT community in our public schools – because when we look historically at the world's worst atrocities it all begins by instilling or ignoring bigotry in the formative years of our children's lives. On one of our video's we hear Joseph Stalin say that ideas are more powerful than guns, so if we don't allow our enemies to have guns, why should we allow them to have ideas – and we all know how welcoming a place it was to live in the 1930's era Soviet Union.

However, ideas are the most powerful driving force of the human race, and the idea that bullying can persist, that hatred is okay, that bigotry of any kind is in the least bit acceptable, is an idea we have to actively counter in the next generation of New Yorkers while we still have their attention in their school age years.

I am here today because the Simon Wiesenthal Center wants to continue to be part of the solution to the bullying problem in our school systems, public and private. I am here because once we allow the pandora's box of hatred to intrude into our society there is no telling where it will end. I am here to lend our name in support of today's proceedings and to let the New York City Council and the LGBT community know that they have an ally in the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

THE CENTER

Oversight: The Treatment of LGBT students, family and staff in the NYC public school system, 2/25/14

Introduction

My name is Jeff Levin, and I am the Family Services Program Coordinator at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center. Each week, 6,000 unique individuals visit the Center and over 300 different educational, cultural, professional, and recreational groups meet at The Center. The Center is open 365 days a year from morning till night and is a central location that is accessible within 60-minutes travel via all major subway lines to over 75% of all LGBT New Yorkers.

I have worked with the LGBT community, parents and families for 3 years, and also come to share the experiences of my colleagues who work in our Youth program. We serve over 2000 LGBT youth and families on an annual basis in our Youth and Families programs and have contact with countless school personnel through community outreach and trainings. Center Youth is a positive youth development, community-based program running over 30 groups a week from Tuesday – Saturdays. Since 1989, Center Families has been helping the LGBT community build, nurture, grow, and support families.

Current situation and challenges

While the New York City public school system has made strides, such as the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) and the 2007 launch by the New York City Department of Education of the Respect for All program, there remains little to no oversight of these requirements other than through hearings like this. We continue to see many students and families who face bullying,

discrimination, harassment, and worse, based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or family make-up.

While there have been great strides towards equality for LGBT community members in the nation and in New York State, there are still disparities in the treatment of LGBT families and youth in New York City public schools. We know that institutional policies and the lack of inclusion obstruct the wellbeing of LGBT families. A 2008 nationwide survey of LGBT parents and their school-age children found that 40% of students with LGBT parents reported being verbally harassed at school because of their families (Movement Advancement Project "All Children Matter"). GLSEN's 2011 *State Snapshot* of New York shows that 90% of students hear homophobic remarks regularly at school, with 27% regularly hearing staff make negative remarks about someone's gender expression and 17% of students reporting regularly hearing school staff make homophobic remarks.

These are not academic issues and we hear this from the youth that we serve and community members who participate in the Center's LGBT Parent Advisory to the Department of Education group. Parents raise concerns about the lack of inclusive forms, staff that is not culturally competent in working with LGBT families, and the lack of educational materials and books that are inclusive of LGBT families.

Community impact

The Center, in partnership with the Ali Forney Center and the Hetrick-Martin Institute, offers the Leadership, Education, Advancement and Placement (LEAP) Program to youth 18-21. The LEAP Program is designed to increase access to college and careers to homeless and runaway

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THE CENTER

LGBT young people. While we wish that all young people could gain the skills needed for college and a career at their local public schools, we know all too well that many LGBT youth grow into adulthood under-employed due to diminished educational attainment resulting from violence and harassment in school and ongoing discrimination in the workplace. They miss out on opportunities to develop core competencies for success in their school, work, social, family, and community life.

LGBT headed households remain under-represented and under-valued in New York City public schools. When school staff and administrators fail to make the hallway, bathroom, and classroom spaces free of homophobic and transphobic language, our children are scared, angry, and alienated. Parents and professionals participating in the LGBT Parent Advisory to the Department of Education group have numerous questions, as well as recommendations, for the City Council on how to best make their voice heard to ensure the safety and well-being of their families and children.

Comments for the City Council

I would like to thank Council Member and Chair of the Committee on Education Daniel Dromm for holding this hearing. We are hopeful that the treatment of LGBT students, family and staff in public schools is a priority for the Committee.

The Dignity For All Students Act and The Respect For All Program are steps in the right direction, and we believe that their impacts could be much greater with increased oversight. Who is accountable for ensuring staff and administrators are accessing necessary resources and mandated trainings? When bullying and harassment occurs,

who is held accountable? A lack of universal forms with gender-neutral language and parentage status for registration, emergency, and medical contact forms is a small way to ensure that LGBT families, of all make-ups, are included and their experiences validated. We know that there have been successful book drives by the City Council to help get LGBT affirming books onto shelves. Are the schools receiving the books? Are the school staff trained and experienced to utilize the books?

We recommend that the City Council continue to implement the Respect For All Program and the Dignity For All Students Act, and actively seek out the successes and challenges of both. Centralized, universal forms for registration, emergency and medical contact, should be gender neutral, with options and fill-in spaces for families of all shapes and sizes to be included. We also recommend that the City Council support and mandate anti-bullying and harassment policies, ensure that school personnel are trained effectively, be committed to Gay-Straight alliances being active and supported, and reach out to the LGBT community to get assistance in ensuring that LGBT-inclusive curricular resources are available to staff and youth. With the active participation of LGBT parents, youth, and staff, the City Council can positively affect school climate and ensure that New York City public schools are safe for all LGBT students, family, and staff

Thank you,
Jeff Levin, LMSW
Family Services Program Coordinator

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Good Afternoon Chairperson Dromm, Councilmembers Gentile, Garodnick, Chin, Levin, Rose, Weprin, Williams, King, Barron, Deutsch, Levin, Maisel, Reynoso, Treygor.

It is a great honor and privilege to be here today and to speak with you on a subject that I have hoped would come to the attention of the New York City Council. If you have never met me before, my name is Bryan Ellicott. I am sitting before you not only as an out and proud transgender and bisexual man who is involved with many different efforts within the LGBT community and outside it, but also as proud adult who went through the New York City public school system on Staten Island. I went to Public School 42 (same as Councilmember Ignizio), Paulo Intermediate School 75, and South Richmond High School, where I graduated from in June of 2008.

However, the person that sits before you today didn't exist back then, but it wasn't for a lack of trying. I tried so many times to find the words to express who I knew I was supposed to be, but I was told "that can't be, it's not normal, maybe you need to rethink this". Or my personal favorite: "but you're such a nice looking girl, why would you want to do that?" It took me years to figure out that it wasn't just me, that I wasn't the only one going through something like this. Being a teenager is hard enough when people think you're normal, but not having the proper terms and knowledge to express yourself makes adolescence that much more difficult.

Every year we'd be taught about the contributions of the Women and African American heroes and activists of our great country. It always made sense why: they took on the impossible odds and they are remembered for their achievements and for the trails they blazed for others. People like Rosa Parks, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Eleanor Roosevelt, Dr Martin Luther King, Jackie Robinson, Nelson Mandela, Fredrick Douglass, and others have made their way into the history books and been held up as heroes by generations of schoolchildren.

A little LGBT history would have made it seem like I wasn't the only one with the things in mind that I thought was just another crazy idea. History and politics were always my thing. It's where I could point out to my teachers that loud and obnoxious

people do change the world. It wasn't until college that I learned about the Stonewall Riots, Harvey Milk, ACT UP, the statement made at the 1980 Democratic National Convention that officially included the party's position on LGBT rights, and the story that is Don't Ask Don't Tell, among other things. In recent months, the story of Edie Windsor's battle with the Supreme Court and the signing of Jason Collins, the first openly gay NBA player, to the Brooklyn Nets have made headlines. And there will be more stories like this, stories of coming out, dealing with oppression, and eventually overcoming the obstacles faced by millions of LGBT Americans every day.

We have so much history with the LGBT and HIV-AIDS movement in our city. Our city has made some great contributions politically and non-politically. Those things deserve to be taught, because there will always be that child in the class who has learned or read something and they have just been given a reason to try and change the world for the better. There will also always be that child in the classroom who thinks they are weird or crazy or alien for the way they feel, and that child deserves to know that there are plenty of other people out there like them, people who have made a difference in the world without having to hide their truth. New York City has a great opportunity here to use its history to educate its children, and it is time we used that history to our fullest advantage to make our classrooms more inclusive.

Thank You,

Bryan J. Ellicott

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THE COALITION FOR ASIAN AMERICAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

COALITION FOR ASIAN AMERICAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (CACF) Testimony

**Before the NYC Council Education Committee Regarding
LGBTQ Youth in Education**

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Good afternoon, my name is Caron Chen, and I am the Education Program Associate for the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF). Since 1986, CACF is the nation's only pan-Asian children's advocacy organization, and works to improve the health and well-being of Asian Pacific American (APA) children and families in New York City in three key policy areas: education, health and child welfare. CACF challenges stereotypes of Asian Pacific Americans as a "model minority" and advocates on behalf of underserved families in our community, especially immigrants struggling with poverty and limited English skills. CACF promotes better policies, funding, and services for East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander children, youth, and families. I would like to thank Chair Dromm and members Education Committee for holding this important hearing to explore LGBTQ youth in our public education system.

As New York City begins to align itself more closely with state and federal education priorities is imperative that the Department of Education (DOE) take a more nuanced look at the educational experience and college readiness needs of New York City's diverse student population and communities. At CACF, we have advocated to fully address the whole student, and focus on youth development in regards to social and interpersonal development, while looking into additional measures of learning comprehension that just high-stakes testing. We feel that today's hearing as we focus on the LGBTQ community can really attest to examining how we can better support or youth and better provide a healthy learning environment where all youth can feel safe to learn and explore their identities.

In CACF's work, we often feel that we consistently have to present what our community looks like and the issues that we face.

Consider the following statistics:

- 4 out of 5 Asian Pacific Americans are foreign-born.
- Asian Pacific Americans have the highest rate (28%) of linguistic isolation, meaning that no one over the age of 14 in a household speaks English well.
- 1 out of 2 Asian Pacific American children is born into poverty.

With regard to education outcomes, the Asian model minority myth and stereotype has been most pervasive *and as a result*, Asian Pacific American students (APAs) who make up almost 14% of the New York City public school population and all too often are left out of or invisible in the on-going education reform debates which negatively impacts their ability to engage in meaningful college and career readiness opportunities. Consider these facts:

- 1 out of 4 Asian Pacific American high school students does not graduate on time or at all.

- 1 out of 5 Asian Pacific American students is an English Language Learner.
- 1 out of 5 English Language Learner students is Asian Pacific American.

As CACF fights to challenge the invisibility of the needs of APA youth in education, we are here today to also fight the often times overlooked issues of our LGBTQ youth. For the APA community, where majority come from working class immigrant families, our youth do not have much support and guidance at home. Many of their parents do not speak English or are barely home as they are out at work 6-7 days a week. When it comes to navigating the education system and preparing for college, it becomes daunting as they do not know where to go to find guidance. For many of the LGBTQ youth that we have worked with, they feel even more isolated as the coming out process is something that they cannot speak to their family about. Many already feel the pressure of the financial burden of their parents working long hours to support them here, and they do not want to place the additional burden of opening their LGBTQ identity to their family. For many, they do not exactly know how to articulate this. In the schools, one the biggest challenges is bullying, harassment and threats. There is fear and heavy frustration for the youth. We have worked with youth that have been reluctant to even approach teachers for fear of judgment and what they might think.

CACF urges the New York City Council to work with the NYC Department of Education (DOE) to **develop and implement measures to ensure a safe learning environment for all students that includes:**

- **Mandate and enforce the Anti-bully regulations in the DOE.** Document any forms of bias-base harassment and have an annual report listing all reported incidents.
- **Designing an integrated curriculum and pedagogical approach that includes teaching tolerance and acknowledging the diversity of our New York City student population.** As there is currently the *Respect for All* curriculums, we also would promote the integration of learning about the diversity of our communities and have critical discussions in the classroom about oppression. These lessons would promote community and the important ability for youth to be critical thinkers. This is another college-readiness skill would provide confidence, resiliency, and self-advocacy skills needed in order to achieve their goals.
- **Cultural competency training for DOE and CUNY teaching and counseling staff so that they can provide all students and their parents with counseling to successfully navigate K-12.** Parents can place an enormous amount of pressure on their children to succeed academically and achieve high grades to the exclusion youth development driven measures of college readiness (e.g. developing social skills, leadership qualities, and a sense of future orientation). These resources can provide families how to fully support their children outside of the rigors of academics and also support them on the development of self and identity.
- **Increase the number of DOE college counseling and advisement staff and reduce caseloads.** For example, with caseloads of approximately 300:1 at large, and 80:1 at smaller high schools, it is nearly impossible for school staff to provide the level of guidance and support that any student would need.

In addition to providing a safe learning environment, for LGBTQ youth we need to make sure that also a full array of intensive, social, cultural and family supports to ensure that their unique challenges are fully acknowledged and addressed as our public school system advances a well-rounded education agenda for all students. Thank you all for this opportunity to testify.

ACT UP NY Education committee and the NYC the K-12 HIV Curriculum 1/2

One of the main issues with the k-12 hiv curriculum, refers to the numbers of students who are sexually active and are not using condoms, “almost 40% of our high school students engage in behaviors that put them at risk for acquiring hiv.” (1). When compared with Philadelphia and DC, there is a huge disparity in the numbers. While in NYC 44%, in Philadelphia 67% and in DC 62% of male students had sex. What justifies that difference? The teaching of abstinence which happens throughout curriculums cannot explain it. The NYC K-12 HIV curriculum has a heavy dose of abstinence, as if that was good policy. That is a failed policy, that is a policy of denial.

The disparity between NYC data and other metropolitan areas, the “Percentage of high school students who ever had sexual intercourse” (table 64 extract on the verse), indicates that there is something wrong with NYC numbers. While young adults in the city have much easier access and opportunities to have sex, NY State numbers are higher than the city numbers. How can that be explained if not by failure on reporting?

Most importantly; how the HIV curriculum is being implemented? Are teachers comfortable with the material and prepared talk about sex, to deal with difficult questions about sexuality, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy? The answer is **NO**.

During AIDS 2012, there was a session between health and education officials (Sexual Health and Sex Education - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoZ6_D-1TII). It became clear that there is a dance between educators and health care professionals, who share responsibility, but at the end no one assumes the responsibility for young gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (MSM) increasing rates of HIV infection, it became obvious. **That has to end!** The DOHMH must take responsibility on HIV; it is a health issue, which of course is influenced by education. The DOHMH must make sure those teachers who teach HIV prevention, have accurate information, that they are comfortable with the material, that the lessons are based on science and free from personal bias towards sex, sex education or homophobia.

The fact is, that young black and Latino gay, bisexual and other MSM, comprise the population who is seeing the heights increases on HIV transmission rates. While NYC schools fail to demystify HIV and offer an education that would enable students to protect themselves and reduce the risks for HIV when they have sex, we not only fail their education, but we endanger their lives and contribute to the spread of HIV specially among young city residents.

We from ACT UP NY demand that the NYC HIV Curriculum implementation and teachers be evaluated, a survey to find out the percentage of students, from what grades are having sex, with what frequency, if they use condoms or not, if they have easy access to condoms and lubricant and what have they learned from lessons on HIV prevention.

ACT UP NY Education committee and the NYC the K-12 HIV Curriculum 2/2

Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance — United States, 2011 June 8, 2012
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss6104.pdf>

It is important to note that this study analyses risks like riding a bike without a helmet to having sex without a condom and everything in between.

Ever Had Sexual Intercourse (P24)

“Overall, the prevalence of having ever had sexual intercourse was higher among 10th-grade (43.8%), 11th-grade (53.2%), and 12th-grade (63.1%) than 9th-grade (32.9%) students; higher among 11th-grade (53.2%) and 12th-grade (63.1%) ...”

Currently Sexually Active (p25)

“Nationwide, 33.7% of students had had sexual intercourse with at least one person during the 3 months before the survey”

(1) Condom Use (P 26)

“Among the 33.7% of currently sexually active students nationwide, 60.2% reported that either they or their partner had used a condom during last sexual intercourse” That means 40% are not using condoms.

TABLE 64. (Continued) Percentage of high school students who ever had sexual intercourse and who had sexual intercourse for the first time before age 13 years, by sex — selected U.S. sites, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2011

	Ever had sexual intercourse			Had first sexual intercourse before age 13 years		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	total
NY	39.6(36.1–43.2)	44.5(40.5–48.6)	42.0%	4.0(2.9–5.3)	7.6(6.1–9.5)	5.7%
New York City, NY	32.1(28.3–36.2)	43.9(40.6–47.3)	37.8%	3.9(3.0–4.9)	10.5(9.1–12.0)	7.0%
Philadelphia, PA	55.5(50.2–60.6)	66.9(60.8–72.4)	61.0%	5.9(4.1–8.4)	25.0(21.3–29.3)	15.1%
District of Columbia	49.3(44.1–54.5)	61.7(55.4–67.5)	54.9%	4.6(2.9–7.1)	24.0(19.8–28.7)	13.3%



ACT UP NY – Education Committee

Monday, February 25, 2014.

NYC City Council Hearing

The treatment of LGBTQA students, family & staff in the NYC public school system.

Hi, my name is Sarah Camiscoli and I teach ESL through writing and literature to 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 11th graders at the Bronx Academy of Letters in Mott Haven. I also co-facilitate the Gay Straight Alliance with powerful educators and students. I identify as gay.

Several weeks ago, while proctoring a middle school exam, I smiled and waved at one of the more unique, effeminately dressed young men in the 6th grade. Though he is not one of my students, we often greet one another in recognition. After we performed our usual acknowledgement, I complimented his new aqua green faux hawk hair do. He smiled warmly and said, "You know, we're not normal, me and you." I paused, taken aback by his statement. He continued, "We're just not like other people. We don't dress or think like normal people." Taking this as an opportunity, I asked him to clarify the concept of "normal." "I don't know," he kept saying. "Just normal." And even though, after some persuasion, I was able to convince him that what wasn't "normal" about us was unique, fabulous, and "flawless" (a reference to a recent Beyoncé hit he thoroughly enjoyed), he felt strongly that normalcy at our school did not involve either of us. And even though we left smiling, appreciating our difference, there was a part of me that felt unsettled about the conversation.

One week later, while cutting valentines during our high school Gay-Straight Alliance meeting, one of the students said, "You heard about that middle schooler? The little cute kid? He got jumped. Because they say he acts like a girl." After questioning the student further, I concluded that it was in fact the student who had spoken to me about normalcy the week before. And while I felt pained by the news, there was a strange irony at that moment. I was sitting only several feet away from a Respect for all Poster and in a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) meeting that was culminating in making valentines for the entire high school. There were clearly supports and spaces there for our LGBTQA community, but those spaces were not prevalent in our middle school and that support did not permeate the culture. We need to consider more deeply what it means to promote a culture of respect and acceptance in diverse schools.

I believe the Respect for All Campaign is a powerful and commendable initiative taken by the DOE to "promote respect" and "maintain a safe and supportive learning environment" for all students. But schools **don't** currently feel safe for all students. Many students don't feel "normal" and worry about their physical and emotional safety. Thus, maintenance of what we have now is not enough. If I were to give a recommendation for shifting school culture it would be to offer more funds to support schools on implementing these supports on a systemic level. While trainings for staff, the designation of a RFA liaison, and awards granted to exemplary schools are commendable, many schools need more comprehensive budgets to promote this work. If the DOE wishes to promote respect for students despite their difference, schools need more funds allocated to facilitate the time and implementation of intentional moves to shift culture. For example, if our H.S. GSA had more funds made available by RFA to pay our GSA facilitators per-session for after school planning and to use as a budget for student-organized events, our H.S. students could plan events in our middle school. Such funds could also be allocated to pay M.S. teachers to facilitate an effective, intentional program to intervene in the largely homophobic culture that our LGBTQA middle schoolers combat daily. Really having Respect for All means shifting culture and from my perspective a dramatic shift in culture requires systemic change. In order for individuals to be a part of this change we need more regular time and resources, which means a more comprehensive budget, for the implementation of this powerful initiative.

Thank you.

Contact:

Sarah Camiscoli

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ESL coordinator, co-facilitator of Gay Straight Alliance

The Urban Assembly Bronx Academy of Letters

339 Morris Ave, Bronx, NY 10451

NYC City Council Hearing – The treatment of LGBTQ students, family & staff in the NYC public school system

Mon Feb 25, 2014

Hi, my name is José Rodriguez and I am a gay student at Bronx Letters. I am in 12th grade and have been involved in our Gay Straight Alliance for four years. Last year, I was a facilitator for our small groups in GSA and I co-led a workshop at a city conference for LGBTQ youth. This year, I help plan events and get people excited about our club.

Besides GSA, my experience at Bronx Letters has been... interesting. I get more respect for being gay from the teachers and staff members than the ignorant children in our school. Starting in my 9th grade year, it seemed like no matter what way I put my hair, it was always seen as gay, stupid or faggoty. One time I straightened my hair for my friends Sweet 16 and I came to school the next day. As I walked into the cafeteria that day, random students were flicking at my hair and laughing at me.

This year, ever since we did advertising for GSA in the Freshman classes, there is this one student who constantly talks about me and points at me like I'm some sort of infected person. If you're a boy and you're gay, everyone thinks you're going to hit on them or flirt, and its like "get away from me, nasty." A lot of this happens in the absence of a teacher. It's like, ignorant as they are, they know to keep quiet.

And they do that crap to us, over and over again, and then that makes me and other kids too ready to fight back. But if we do fight back, we're seen as the problem starters.

This means that at school, I feel like I'm being segregated, forced to just hang out with girls and made fun of by ignorant straight boys.

It's not that I hate school, but sometimes... I hate school. It feels like I'm trapped. No matter which direction I go, I'm seen as a bad guy. Teachers haven't seen it with their own eyes and can't do anything, and if I turn someone in, I'm a snitch. How am supposed to function properly if I can't get help?

José Rodriguez, 12th grader at
The Urban Assembly Bronx Academy of Letters
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Council of School Supervisors and Administrators, New York City
Local 1: American Federation of School Administrators, AFL-CIO

FOR THE RECORD

The Treatment of LGBT Students, Family and Staff in the NYC Public School System

New York City Council, Committee on Education

Hon. Danny Dromm

Chair - Education Committee

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

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The Council of School Supervisors & Administrators believes that all of our students, families and staff must be treated fairly. No one can be overlooked. This is a question of equity. Over the years, members of the LGBT community have been among the most maligned and bullied citizens in both our schools and our city as a whole. It is necessary that our school leaders and all other members of our education system take proactive measures to ensure the fair treatment of LGBT students, educators and other staff.

CSA members are trusted to set the tone in our schools and we must accept the responsibility to promote an environment in which all students, families and staff feel safe, comfortable and welcome. CSA members need to be sensitive to the rights of the LGBT community and ensure that those rights are protected. It is important that we create opportunities for dialogue as well as a school culture that embraces diversity and fosters a climate in which all people live and work harmoniously with each other.

CSA represents 6,100 Principals, Assistant Principals, Supervisors and Education Administrators who work in the NYC public schools and 200 Directors and Assistant Directors who work in city-subsidized Centers for Early Childhood Education (ECE). CSA also has nearly 6,400 retired school supervisors in its Retiree Chapter as well as more than 3,300 of their spouses and domestic partners.

Sincerely,
Ernest Logan
CSA President

Testimony on the Treatment of LGBT students, family and staff

Members of the Council. My name is Alim Gafar. I am a parent of an elementary school student in District 26 and the Co-Chair of CPAC, the parent organization representing the city's 1.2 million non-charter public school students. I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on this timely and important matter.

This city is a jewel that glimmers with the light of its vast, diverse members. We are diverse in our cultural background. In our homelands. In our languages. In our religious beliefs. In short — in who we are. Since the days of the Dutch settlers, the freedom to be who you are, who you want to be has been a core trait of New Yorkers.

But it's never been easy. At different times in this city's life, different groups have suffered intimidation, alienation, and discrimination. In school, simply being labeled a nerd could get you bullied. I know. I experienced it myself as a youth. And among those dealing with intolerance today are members of the LGBT community.

As a leader of the parent community, this is especially concerning. While the DOE's Discipline Code and the Chancellor's Regulations (specifically A-842) covers student-to-student discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying, it's not at all clear that this extends to families on campus. Likewise there is nothing I know of in the Regulations that offers this protection to staff and

teachers. Most likely, if it exists at all, it is part of the collective bargaining agreement. And absent a contract, it is unclear how teachers and staff would be protected.

Protection in writing is one thing. Execution is another. From parents we hear varying stories regarding schools enforcing the provisions in their Discipline Code — the agreement of acceptable conduct required by schools that parents sign off on. For some, justice is not swift. The prolonged period to have bullying matters resolved only serves to exacerbate the victim's torment and sometime, the accused's. As parents and for those of us who manage people know, correcting behavior is most effective when remediation occurs early, near the time of the transgression. This needs to be remembered; often, parents feel that justice gets lost out to process. It's not unheard of to hear of bullying reported in September still unresolved the following May.

Still better is to find a way to ensure tolerance by providing meaningful instruction and resources to obviate the likelihood of bullying in the first place. We educate for knowledge. We should also educate for tolerance.

To ensure uniform protection is afforded to all stakeholders on school grounds, a local law should be contemplated. CPAC would be willing to work with the City Council to engage parents and other stakeholders in an effort to craft a bill that provides protection to members of the LGBT community.

Thank you.

**TESTIMONY OF LOCAL 372 RECORDING SECRETARY
MILAGROS RODRIGUEZ**

**BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION
COMMITTEE HEARING ON**

**OVERSIGHT: "THE TREATMENT OF LGBT STUDENTS, FAMILY
AND STAFF IN THE NYC PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM"**

**HONORABLE DANIEL DROMM
CHAIRMAN**

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 25, 2014

GOOD AFTERNOON CHAIRMAN DROMM AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE. ON BEHALF OF THE 25,000 SCHOOL AIDES, PARENT AND COMMUNITY COORDINATORS, CROSSING GUARDS, LUNCHROOM WORKERS, COUNSELORS AND SAPIs PROFESSIONALS I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK OUT ON THIS SUBJECT WHICH HAS BEEN IGNORED FOR FAR TOO LONG.

I AM BY PROFESSION ONE OF THE 300 TRAINED SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION SPECIALISTS (SAPIS) PROFESSIONAL CURRENTLY WORKING WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

WE ARE THE PROFESSIONALS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING VIOLENCE, DRUG PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION SERVICES WITHIN THE SCHOOLS WE ARE ASSIGNED. TOWARD THAT END WE INITIATE THE PREVENTION SERVICES INCLUDING INDIVIDUAL, GROUP, FAMILY AND CRISIS COUNSELING; PROVIDE CLASSROOM PRESENTATIONS, PEER PROGRAMS AND MAKE REFERRALS FOR ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL SERVICES.

WORKING WITHIN THE SCHOOLS WE SEE THE DAILY INTERACTION BETWEEN STUDENTS AND SIT WITH THOSE STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN THE VICTIMS OF THE VERBAL TAUNTS, AND BULLYING. UNFORTUNATELY, WE ALSO DEAL WITH THESE SAME VICTIMS AFTER THEY HAVE TURNED TO DRUGS, ALCOHOL IN AN EFFORT TO COPE WITH THE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL HURT.

BY BEING IN SCHOOLS EVERYDAY WE CERTAINLY DIDN'T NEED TO SEE A NATIONAL STUDY TO TELL US THAT MORE THAN 80% OF LGBT STUDENTS HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF VERBAL ABUSE AND HARRASSMENT, OR THAT NEARLY 40% HAVE BEEN PHYSICALLY PUSHED OR SHOVED IN SCHOOL.

A 2012 REPORT ISSUED BY THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS FOUND THAT DUE TO THE "STRESS THAT COMES FROM THE DAILY BATTLES WITH DISCRIMINATION AND STIGMA ...AS MUCH AS 20% TO 30% OF THE LGBT COMMUNITY ARE SUBSTANCE ABUSERS COMPARED TO 9% OF THE GENERAL POPULATION.

NO ONE SHOULD BE SUBJECTED TO ANY TYPE OF VERBAL OR PHYSICAL ABUSE. LOCAL 372 BELIEVES EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO LIVE THEIR LIVES IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF DIGNITY AND RESPECT.

WE ALSO BELIEVE WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO THE VICTIMS OF HARASSMENT AND BULLYING, AND TO THOSE WHO HAVE TURNED TO DRUGS AND ALCOHOL, TO DO EVERYTHING IN OUR POWER TO BRING THEM BACK FROM THE NETHERWORLD OF DRUGS AND ALCOHOL TO A LIFE OF FULFILLMENT AND SOBRIETY.

EACH OF THE 300 SAPIs PROFESSIONALS IN THE SYSTEM HAVE BUILT OUR CAREERS UPON DOING JUST THAT. WE ALSO KNOW THAT IN A SCHOOL SYSTEM OF 1.1 MILLION STUDENTS WE ARE GOING TO NEED MORE THAN 300 DEDICATED MEN AND WOMEN TO ENSURE EACH AND EVERY STUDENT IN NEED OF THOSE SERVICES RECEIVES THEM.

THANK YOU.



NYCLU

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TESTIMONY OF JOHANNA MILLER AND ROBERT HODGSON¹

before

The New York City Council
Committee on Education

Regarding

The treatment of LGBTQ students, family and staff in the NYC public school system

February 25, 2014

The New York Civil Liberties Union respectfully submits the following testimony regarding the treatment of LGBTQ students, family, and staff in the NYC public school system. We would like to thank the Committee on Education and Councilmember Dromm for giving the NYCLU the opportunity to provide testimony today regarding ensuring that the rights of all students are respected and protected in New York City public schools.

The NYCLU, the New York state affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union, is a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization with eight offices across the state and nearly 50,000 members and supporters statewide. The NYCLU's mission is to defend and promote the fundamental principles, rights, and constitutional values embodied in the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution and the Constitution of the State of New York.

As part of the NYCLU's longstanding commitment to protect the right to a quality education for all of New York's children, we have spent over a decade advocating for schools to prevent and address bias-based discrimination against, and harassment of, LGBTQ students. Our work has included legislative campaigns in support of the statewide Dignity for All Students Act

¹ With contributions by Lauren Frederico and Brooke Menschel.

(“DASA”) and its local counterparts (“Local Law 42” and NYC DOE’s “Respect for All” program), advocacy on behalf of individual targets of bias-based harassment and discrimination, and ongoing participation on the State Education Department’s Dignity Implementation Task Force. In addition, our work to improve school discipline and restrict the role of the criminal justice system in schools affords us a unique perspective on how the criminalization of student behaviors disproportionately affects LGBTQ students.

The NYCLU regularly receives calls from parents, students, and teachers about the rights of LGBTQ students in school, including those who are subjected to such severe harassment that attending school each day is a challenge. In our communication with educators and school staff, it has become increasingly clear that schools need and want more guidance on how to enforce New York State laws and City ordinances that protect LGBTQ youth, particularly transgender and gender non-conforming students. Combating discrimination and harassment in NYC schools ~~requires an organized and comprehensive strategy—not only when bias incidents involve young~~ people or occur on school grounds, but wherever schools have the opportunity to instill the values of diversity and respect in the next generation of New Yorkers.¹ In the experience of the NYCLU, however, based on intakes and work with the students who make up our Teen Activist Project (“TAP”), New York City schools are implementing DASA and Respect for All piecemeal, if at all.

Today our remarks will focus on the work that still needs to be done to lay the groundwork in schools for the creation of a safe and welcoming space for LGBTQ students.

I. LGBTQ youth, an already vulnerable population, regularly face discrimination and harassment in school.

National research shows that anti-LGBTQ harassment in schools is widespread and persistent. More than 84% of LGBTQ youth report hearing “that’s so gay” used in a negative way at school, 81% report being verbally harassed and 60% said that they did not report an incident of harassment because they believed no action would be taken by school staff.ⁱⁱ Among the most vulnerable members of our community, LGBTQ youth are at increased risk for dropping out of school and are more likely to attempt suicide in their lifetime than their peers.ⁱⁱⁱ In addition, LGBTQ students are among the populations of students that experience a disproportionately high number of severe disciplinary actions (from suspensions to criminal sanctions) at the hands of school authorities—indeed, LGBTQ students are 40% more likely than other teens to receive punishment at school, and 50% more likely to be stopped by the police.^{iv} Clearly, ingrained prejudice and discrimination exists even among the adults whose job it is to protect students from discrimination.

~~We commend the DOE for taking important steps to address bullying, including taking~~

on a leadership role on the State Dignity Implementation Task Force, and for working with recognized leaders in the field to provide training for educators. Yet it is still failing to meet all its obligations under Local Law 42 and DASA. As a result, far too few students understand the implications of DASA for their lives, their rights under the law, and whom they should go to for help if they feel marginalized in school. For example, in a recent survey conducted by members of the NYCLU’s Teen Activist Project, we found that only nine percent of NYC students surveyed were able to correctly identify their Respect for All/ DASA Coordinator.^v In order to ensure LGBTQ youth stay in school and feel supported by educators and peers, the NYCLU offers the following recommendations:

1. Implement Clearly Articulated Policies Protecting the Rights of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Students

Transgender and gender non-conforming youth experience overwhelming amounts of harassment and discrimination in schools throughout New York City and across the country. We use those terms to refer to students whose gender identity differs from the gender assigned to them at birth or whose gender expression does not conform to societal expectations for their assigned gender. The 2011 National School Climate Survey conducted by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (“GLSEN”) ^{vi} found that 64% of transgender students had been verbally harassed in the past year because of their gender expression, more than a quarter had been physically harassed or assaulted, and more than 60% of students who were victimized did not report the events to school authorities. These traumatic experiences have demonstrably negative effects on students: more than half (53%) skipped school at least once in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable, their GPAs dropped precipitously, and, as noted in multiple studies, many became at-risk for developing depression and suicidal tendencies. The evidence is overwhelming that transgender and gender non-conforming youth need active school support and protection for their physical, mental, and educational well being.

New York and federal law (DASA, Local Law 42, and federal Title IX, 20 U.S.C. § 1681) require schools to treat transgender students equally and fairly. This means that all programs, activities, and education practices must be conducted free from discrimination based on actual or perceived gender identity, gender expression, or gender. DASA further provides that public schools have an affirmative obligation to combat students’ experience of a “hostile environment” in school, and a responsibility to provide equal educational opportunities to all pupils.

In practice, these laws require that schools accept and affirm a transgender or gender non-conforming student's preferred pronoun and name; update school records to reflect the student's name and gender identity; work directly with the student (and, if appropriate, the student's family) to ensure that the student's needs are being met; and provide access to facilities (including bathrooms and locker rooms) that correspond to the student's gender identity.

A student who is transitioning socially, or who has recently shared their gender identity with others, must be supported by their school, and school personnel must act affirmatively to ease the transition at school and ensure that harassment and discrimination are avoided by students and staff alike. In addition, schools must protect the privacy of transgender and gender non-conforming students; school authorities must not "out" a student to teachers, peers, or parents without permission, and must be sensitive to the student's right to disclose (or not disclose) their gender identity according to the student's own timeline.

Despite the fact that DASA, Local Law 42, and Title IX all require schools to implement the measures outlined above, many school administrators and staff remain largely in the dark about their responsibilities, leading to widespread, and avoidable, violations of students' rights.

Only recently, an allied organization made us aware of a middle school student at a New York City public school who was regularly harassed for presenting a gender non-conforming appearance. The school failed to effectively address the harassment, and indeed exacerbated it by unnecessarily and excessively segregating mundane activities—like standing in line—by gender. The student, harassed and regularly humiliated, felt compelled to transfer schools.

2. Improve Training

In addition to written policies clearly enumerating the rights of transgender and gender non-conforming students, and best practices for protecting those rights, New York City schools

must ensure that these and related policies are implemented effectively, with improved trainings for all school personnel and students. Both City and State DASA require intensive training of adults who work in schools, curricula that promote tolerance among students of all ages, and clear pathways for the reporting, investigation, and resolution of student complaints of bullying and harassment. Both laws require the identification of a coordinator in each school who has received intensive training and who will ensure that the laws are implemented correctly (known as the “Respect for All” or “Dignity Act Coordinator”).

For DASA to reach its full potential in practice, all adults who work in school buildings must receive some training on LGBTQ history, challenges for LGBTQ youth, and how to respond to harassment in a supportive way. Non-teaching staff such as cafeteria workers, bus drivers, and custodians need support to recognize and respond to harassment, and to challenge their own personal biases when working with children. School Safety Officers (“SSOs”) must ~~receive training on these issues as well—currently their pre-service training includes no specific~~ lessons on working with LGBTQ young people or meeting their specific needs. As uniformed members of the NYPD, SSOs’ ability to model respect and cultural sensitivity is a vital opportunity to teach these behaviors to young people.

Professional staff such as teachers, principals, and counselors must have more intensive training, allowing them to advise LGBTQ students, to talk comfortably about LGBTQ issues in class, and to address larger cultural themes of intolerance, violence and discrimination through lesson plans. Educators should be trained on the importance of inclusive classroom conversations, prompt responses to bias-based harassment, and community resources available for LGBTQ students.

3. Integrate LGBTQ-Positive Curricula in Schools

GLSEN's National School Climate Survey found that inclusive curricula contribute to a safer school environment for LGBTQ students, helping them feel more connected to school and reinforcing peer acceptance. National research also confirms that the overwhelming majority, more than 86%, of students are not learning about LGBTQ history, events or people in their classes.^{vii}

From the NYCLU's work with high school students, both through our youth program—the Teen Activist Project—and through presenting workshops in NYC public schools, we have learned firsthand that students often receive little educational information about the LGBTQ community in schools. When gender and sexual orientation are discussed in classes, it is too often in a way that stigmatizes LGBTQ people and further marginalizes students. Given the diversity of our city and our schools, these students are undoubtedly left with more questions than answers about the experiences of LGBTQ New Yorkers. If we want to create a city free from homophobia and transphobia, we have to teach our youngest generation to be allies.

Organizations like GLSEN and Teaching Tolerance have created free lesson plans for educators on the topics of diversity, respect, and LGBTQ history to support school districts that want model curricula to draw from.^{viii} Additionally, curricula used in NYC schools to promote positive responses to diversity should include information on hate or bias crimes^{ix} along with information about community-based organizations, youth friendly and LGBTQ affirming mental health care options, and support services available for victims of bias-based violence.

4. Respond Appropriately to Bias-Based Bullying

The NYCLU recommends that disciplinary responses to bias-based incidents in school should address the root causes of discriminatory incidents. All too often, zero-tolerance policies

mean student misbehavior is met with exclusionary discipline, with little to no time dedicated to working with the student to help them understand the situation at hand. Discipline should help students learn how to correct their behavior, and understand the impact of their actions on others, in order to create safer classrooms that are better for learning. Educators need training on how to best handle disciplinary issues in ways that improve the school climate while supporting the school's vulnerable youth. National research has demonstrated that bullied students felt safest when a teacher listened to their complaint and checked back in later; far fewer students reported feeling safer when their bully was suspended from school.^x Particularly in light of the disproportionate impact that severe disciplinary actions have on LGBTQ students, students with disabilities, and students of color,^{xi} the NYCLU strongly opposes anti-discrimination policies and trainings that emphasize increased punishment and criminal sanctions as the remedy for bias-based harassment.

5. Collect Reliable Data and Use it to Target Solutions

Both DASA and Local Law 42 require a data collection and reporting component.

Working with the New York State Education Department, the NYCLU has received preliminary data from the first year of DASA-related reporting. New York City schools are almost certainly underreporting, which demonstrates confusion about the purpose and meaning of collecting the data, how it will be used, and how to capture and record incidents. In addition, New York is reporting nearly three times as many gender-based incidents of harassment as the rest of the state combined (3,176 versus 1,106), despite the fact that there are over half a million fewer students enrolled here. It appears that these figures include incidents of harassment based on gender expression and gender stereotyping, and there is no question that they bespeak a need for

additional information and investigation, but they may also indicate inaccurate reporting and a lack of understanding of the meaning of each of the categories.

While public reporting of individual incidents in school would be inappropriate, access to reliable aggregate data allows the DOE, the Council, and advocates to identify areas in need of support—for example, patterns of targeting LGBTQ students, boroughs or local districts where bullying is rampant, or areas where data indicates that schools are doing an above-average job of reducing incidents. We encourage the DOE to improve the way that data is collected, analyzed, and actually used in real time by schools to strengthen their programs and safeguard vulnerable students. We are also continuing to work with NYSED to improve, clarify, and simplify reporting requirements and training.

6. Disable Web Filters that Block LGBTQ Content

The NYCLU has received complaints from students and teachers that the internet-filtering software used in New York City public schools—a “Websense” product with default filter settings determined by the DOE— may block access to websites that advocate for the fair treatment of LGBTQ individuals or websites that reflect the viewpoints of LGBTQ people. Our understanding is that the filter permits access to websites with anti-LGBTQ viewpoints and that the filter is unrelated to sexual content. If true, these reports indicate a serious First Amendment violation, and a contributing factor to students’ experience of hostility and discrimination at school. We will be following up with the DOE about its use of the filter.

II. Conclusion

Committee Chairperson Dromm, and the entire Committee on Education, we thank you for your attention to this important issue. New York’s constitution guarantees education to every young person in the state, and improving the school climate for all students will help to ensure

that we are teaching tolerance, proactively addressing anti-LGBTQ violence, and identifying schools as safe havens for LGBTQ youth. We hope the Council will take an active role in establishing clear protections for transgender and gender non-conforming students, making more detailed data about bias-motivated crimes accessible to the public, and countering stereotypes and discrimination in New York City public schools.

ⁱ Anti-Defamation League, “How to Combat Bias and Hate Crimes: An ADL Blueprint For Action” (2003), available at <http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/combating-hate/blueprint.pdf> (last accessed on Feb. 24, 2014).

ⁱⁱ Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network, “The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in Our Nation’s Schools” (2011), available at <http://glsen.org/sites/default/files/2011%20National%20School%20Climate%20Survey%20Full%20Report.pdf> (last accessed on Feb. 24, 2014).

ⁱⁱⁱ Richard T. Liu, Brian Mustanski, “Suicidal Ideation and Self-Harm in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth,” *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, Vol. 42, Issue 3 (March 2012), 221-28, available at <http://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797%2811%2900917-2/abstract> (last accessed Feb. 24, 2014).

^{iv} Himmelstein, Kathryn & Bruckner, Hannah, “Criminal-Justice and School Sanctions Against Nonheterosexual Youth: A National Longitudinal Study,” *Pediatrics*, December 6, 2010., available at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2010/12/06/peds.2009-2306.full.pdf+html> (last accessed on Feb. 24, 2014).

^v TAP members distributed and collected 330 surveys of their peers. The surveys were distributed before the beginning of classes ranging from 9th-12th grade, and they were completed anonymously. Only 9 percent of students were able to name their Dignity Coordinator.

^{vi} See *supra* note ii.

^{vii} *Id.* at 60.

^{viii} See <http://glsen.org/educate/resources/curriculum> (GLSEN training) and <http://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources> (Teaching Tolerance training) (last accessed on Feb. 24, 2014).

^{ix} United States Department of Education, “Protecting Students from Harassment and Hate Crime: A Guide for Schools” (January 2009), available at <http://www2.ed.gov/offices/OCR/archives/Harassment/address1.html> (last accessed on Feb. 24, 2014).

^x Stan Davis, *Youth Voice Project: Student Insights on Bullying and Peer Mistreatment*, Research Press Publishers (2013).

^{xi} See *supra* note iii; see also United States Department of Justice, “Dear Colleague Letter on the Nondiscriminatory Administration of School Discipline,” (January 8, 2014) at 3-5 (highlighting the fact that certain minority racial and ethnic groups tend to be disciplined more severely than their peers), available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201401-title-vi.pdf> (last accessed on Feb. 24, 2014).



EMPIRE STATE PRIDE AGENDA

Testimony for the Hearing on LGBT Students in New York City

From the Empire State Pride Agenda

Prepared by Jonathan Lang

Director of Governmental Projects & Community Development

February 25, 2014

My name is Jonathan Lang, and I am the Director of Governmental Projects & Community Development with the Empire State Pride Agenda. Thank you for providing this opportunity to discuss the state of LGBT students in New York City.

The Empire State Pride Agenda is New York's statewide lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) advocacy organization. Founded in 1990, the Pride Agenda seeks to advance equality and justice for LGBT New Yorkers and our families.

We believe that every child in New York City – regardless of their sexual orientation or their gender identity – should be able to receive a quality education in a safe and supportive environment free of bias-based harassment and discrimination. Instead of focusing on how they can best navigate through their hallways and classrooms, students should focus on how they can unlock their academic potential and excel. This goal cannot, and will not, become a reality if we continue to turn a blind eye to some of the most marginalized and victimized in New York City's schools; LGBT students.

Despite the significant inroads that have been made, many LGBT students continue to be the targets of hate and discrimination in their schools. Schools need the resources and the tools to fully implement the Dignity for All Students Act and must closely monitor the success of their efforts in order to reconfigure approaches if necessary.

As a community, we must also take a closer look at the health disparities impacting LGBT students. According to data from the 2007, 2009 and 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveys, LGB students are at higher risk for intimate partner violence, sexual assault, mental stress and eating disorders. Evidence-based strategies must be developed that meet these challenges head on and create positive pathways for success.

Passing the Dignity for All Students Act

First signed into law by Governor Paterson in September 2010, the Dignity for All Students Act was designed to provide all students in New York public schools an environment free of discrimination and harassment; that no student shall be subjected to harassment, discrimination or bullying by employees or students. Working together with allies such as the Anti Defamation League, the New York Civil Liberties Union and GLSEN, we were able to successfully make the case that enumerated categories of protection needed to be included in the legislation. Therefore, the Dignity for All Students Act goes even further and specifically states that students cannot be discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. New York Education Law has been amended to prohibit harassment against students in school, including harassment based on real or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual gender (including gender identity and expression) and sex.

Originally intended to be fully implemented by July 1, 2012, progress on the Dignity for All Students Act was delayed in order to incorporate revised legislation that included cyberbullying, tighter reporting protocols and new teacher certification requirements. In the interim, a Dignity Act Implementation Task Force consisting of a wide array of stakeholders was created and charged with developing the regulatory, policy and procedural requirements for the Board of Regents' consideration.

A plethora of best practices was either identified or created and many of the best experts in the state were asked to weigh in. A preventative instead of a punitive approach was adopted because the data show that punitive approaches ultimately fail. Detentions and suspensions only exacerbate the conflict because there is no meaningful dialogue to discover the root issues behind the bullying or discrimination. Zero tolerance policies are ineffective and in many instances can be used against the very students they are meant to protect. Infusing all learning opportunities with the themes of civility, respect and diversity help foster stronger, more supportive environments.

Challenges with Implementation of the Dignity for All Students Act

Overall, it is fair to say the implementation of the Dignity for All Students Act has been uneven at best. Responses from schools run the gamut. Some schools recognize that student achievement is intrinsically linked to school environment and have fully embraced the spirit of the Dignity for All Students Act. More often than not, these schools have already had strong programs in place and only needed to expand them in order to meet the new reporting requirements of the Dignity for All Students Act.

But a more typical response has been on the other end of the spectrum. For these schools, the Dignity for All Students Act only represents another unfunded mandate that must be implemented with no resources or clear guidance from the administration. Even though these schools may be well-intentioned, they either have little time or resources to explore

the best practices that have been compiled by the Dignity for All Students Implementation Task Force and are overly-reliant on security guards and metal detectors to prevent violence.

And the Pride Agenda has discovered that all too often, young people and their parents are simply unaware of what the Dignity for All Students Act is and how their school should be using it to create more positive and inclusive school climates. On February 20th, the New York State Education Department convened a student forum to explore issues of school safety. Approximately 50 students from across the state met in Albany, and with peer facilitators explored some of the challenges they had encountered in their classrooms and hallways. They also provided recommendations for how their school conditions could be improved.

Some of the revelations were startling. When asked about the Dignity for Students Act, there was only a handful who had even heard of the law. Even more alarming, no one knew who their Dignity Coordinator – the person responsible for hearing concerns from students – was, or even knew what that person was supposed to do. This is despite the fact that the name of the Dignity Coordinator is supposed to be prominently displayed on school grounds and included in the Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct itself remained a mystery to many of the student participants, with many stating they had received it but it wasn't reviewed and students were unfamiliar with its content or even its purpose.

And students reserved their worst criticism for the policing of their schools. While many understood the need for their school security guards, they were dismayed that there were far more security guards than guidance counselors. Students from the New York City area remarked that their schools were beginning to resemble prisons with the very visible (and sometimes aggressive role) of the NYPD and the abundance of metal detectors. They also felt that their teachers and principals were largely cut out of disciplinary issues when the police were involved and there was little room for school mediation.

LGBT Students and Health Disparities

In August 2013, the Pride Agenda released a new report entitled *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Health Disparities in New York City*. The two datasets we used to compile the information in our report were the New York City Community Health Survey and the New York City Youth Risk Behavior Survey. We then used this information to examine how race, ethnicity, gender, poverty and age affect the health of LGBT communities. Some of the findings we expected, but some were quite unexpected and illustrated the challenges many young LGB people face.

School safety continues to be a concern for many LGB students, which leads to higher truancy rates. We know gay male students have reported missing school due to feeling unsafe in the past 30 days far more than heterosexual male students (14.0% vs. 6.6%). Similarly, lesbian students reported skipping school because they felt unsafe at 15.7% in comparison to only 7.7% of straight female students.

LGB students are also at greater risk for sexual assault and intimate partner violence. Among male students, 15.4% of gay students reported being forced to have sex, with 18.4% of bisexual students reporting the same, and only 4.6% of straight male students reporting having forced sex. The numbers for female students are slightly higher with 19.3% of both lesbian and bisexual students reporting being forced to have sex and 7% of heterosexual female students reporting the same.

According to the data, intimate partner violence is far too common in gay and lesbian relationships. Over 25% of gay male students reported intimate partner violence in comparison to only 10.4% of straight male students, and only 8.5% of straight female students reported intimate partner violence in comparison to 26.7% of lesbian students and 22.7% of bisexual female students.

The most unexpected finding we discovered was how many gay and bisexual male students use laxatives and/or vomiting to lose weight. A shocking 21.6% of gay young men and 15.8% of bisexual young men have vomited or used laxatives for weight control! This is in comparison of only 3.4% of straight high school students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, even though the Dignity for All Students Act is now a reality for nearly 700 school districts in New York State, but passage of this important piece of legislation is not enough.

A stronger emphasis must be placed on implementation with the New York State Education Department providing stronger guidance and clear direction on how schools should be enacting this law.

Public outreach needs to be prioritized. Too many know too little about the Dignity for All Students Act and how it can create change. Depending on a loose coalition of advocates to spread the word is clearly not enough.

With school districts already stretched thin and with competing interests consuming the scant resources that are available, we need New York State to prioritize the Dignity for All Students Act and find the funding to fully support this work.

We also need to identify, and if necessary create, the evidence-based strategies that can address the many health disparities that LGBT students face, and work with nonprofits to implement programming that improve the health and well-being of these young people.

We need to continue to collect accurate information on the challenges that LGBT students face in New York City. New York City is a leader in collecting data on LGB people by asking questions on public health surveys about sexual orientation, but we have no current, reliable information on transgender people because we don't collect information on gender identity and expression. The New York City Department of Education and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene must amend their public health surveys to

include gender identity and expression and ensure that even the most marginalized are counted and considered.

In order to be college- and career-ready, students should be focusing on science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math; not focusing on their safety in what is supposed to be a nurturing environment. Working together, we can find the solutions to these challenges and ensure that the next generation can unlock their potential without being inhibited by discrimination or harassment.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to partnering with you to create a school system that fully appreciates and respects the diversity of our great New York City school system.

On September 22, 2010, Tyler Clementi, 18, a Rutgers University student, jumped to his death off the George Washington Bridge because he was gay...

In the late hours of May 11, 2003, Sakia Gunn, 15, was stabbed to death on the streets of Newark because she was a lesbian...

Tyler Clementi and Sakia Gunn did not have to die.

The media today has successfully targeted and scape-goated the Rutgers University roommates, anti-gay bashers, and now even bullies as the problem. By giving our unspoken consent, we participate in a misguided analysis, which, at best, releases us from taking any responsibility for their deaths. Bashers and bullies are not the problem. They are only symptoms of the problem. As long as homophobia and discrimination remain in place, we must all take responsibility to change the attitudes, practices, and the very culture of our society that ultimately create the bashers and bullies upon whom we so easily place the blame.

Does bullying happen in your schools and neighborhoods?

Do you get harassed on the street because of your sex, race, or sexual orientation?

Do you want to learn how to stop and interrupt discrimination when it happens in your school and community?

MAKE A DIFFERENCE !!

PROJECT REACH Anti-Discrimination CLINIC

WHAT: A significant, 2-day, intensive, city-wide, cross-community, anti-discrimination/social justice training designed to train students to identify, examine, and understand discrimination – personal, institutional, systemic, and global – and develop interventions which proactively challenge bias, bullying, and discrimination in their schools and communities.

GOAL: To create school-based, *Anti-Discrimination Teams* of students and adults, trained in Project Reach's curriculum, who are equipped to address inter-group tensions and discrimination in schools through peer interventions, awareness-building workshops, and youth and adult trainings.

WHO: 10th and 11th grade students (no more than 3-4 students from each participating school/organization).

WHEN: Thursday, *February 27th* and Friday, *February 28th*
9:00 am – 4:00 pm [*including Breakfast and Lunch*]

WHERE: NYC Lab School for Collaborative Studies, 333 W.17th Street, NYC 10011, (212) 691-6119

The Clinic will include interactive workshops, use of film and visual media, and cultural work activities with topics covering discrimination (race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, immigrant bias, etc.), bullying and a range of social justice issues.

If you are interested, please fill out the Anti-Discrimination Clinic **Registration form by Tues, February 25th**. You may learn more about Project Reach by going to www.projectreachnyc.org.

NYC LAB School and Project Reach to host 2-day Anti-Discrimination Clinic*A 12-hour leadership training on Race, Class, and Gender*

Forty years ago (1971), Asian American community activists started Project Reach to provide services to Chinese immigrant youth, a direct response to the rise in Chinese youth gangs. Over 25 years ago (1985) in an action unprecedented among race-segregated youth programs, Project Reach opened its door to all young people and put in place an innovative and dynamic youth organizing training space where understanding and confronting discrimination and systemic oppression would form the foundation of its core youth organizing training curriculum.

Today, through its Social Justice Boot Camp and OUTRIGHT Consortium collaborations, Project Reach works with over 35 community-based organizations and schools in all 5 NYC boroughs and representing all 6 major racial communities. Through out-of-the-city Social Justice Boot Camp retreats in the Catskills, 5-borough youth summits, city-wide lgbt dinners, monthly traveling adult roundtable brunches, and cross-community exchanges (Shinnecock Reservation, Block Island School, RI, Catskills Mountain youth), Project Reach brings together young people and adults who would otherwise never meet.

Inter-group crisis intervention, awareness-building workshops, train-the-trainer series and clinics, and technical assistance to schools, community organizations, and other professional institutions have informed Project Reach's work and development of its nationally recognized "organizing readiness" model and community empowerment curriculum.

Drawing from its over 29 years of anti-discrimination and social justice training, Project Reach will offer a unique opportunity to students to experience its most successful and impactful workshops. All students who are committed to ending discrimination and fighting for social justice are encouraged to attend.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION CLINIC

What: A 12-hour, 2-day, interactive, participant-centered, anti-discrimination training for schools and communities facing bullying/identity destruction, inter-group conflict, and community disempowerment but who are committed to ending discrimination and injustice and to institutionalizing substantive and sustaining culture change. Training will be limited to 25-30 attendees.

When: Thursday and Friday, February 27th and February 28th, 9am-4pm.

Who: 10th and 11th grade students (no more than 3-4 students from each participating school/organization).

Requirements for participation: Attendance at both all-day sessions. **Registration Deadline: Tues, Feb 25th.**

Where: NYC Lab School for Collaborative Studies, 333 W.17th Street, NYC 10011, (212) 691-6119

Trainers: Don Kao, Alexis Davila, Yiman Chen, Patricia Persaud and Toussaint Bonaparte – *With over 35 years of training experience collectively, Project Reach's training team has worked with educational, professional, community-based, and activist communities in New York City and nationally providing crisis intervention, program/organizational development, and technical assistance services.*

Session I

Diversity and Discrimination: Is there really a difference?

Have we achieved diversity? Does discrimination still exist? In this participant-centered, interactive workshop, we will use a boat, index cards, and masking tape....it's about "them" and it's about us. Come take the plunge and learn how misunderstanding "diversity" divides our multiracial, multi-gender, and seemingly disparate communities. We will look at discrimination outside ourselves and within our communities. Leave your guilt and fear at the door. This workshop is about developing practical responses to difficult situations.

Identity Crisis...or An Issue of Power and Privilege

What is Identity? Is Identity important? Using colored dots, an 8-foot Identity Chart, and self-disclosure, participants will introspectively map out what is important, safe, and empowering in their lives in order to better understand issues of power and privilege. How does our own perception of self impact the ways in which we work, address issues of cultural competence, and grow our abilities and skills in examining and challenging identity destruction and individual, community, and social disempowerment.

Session II

The Color Line: "Does skin color REALLY matter?"

"Do you treat people according to the color or shade of their skin?" In these times when increased diversity would suggest that interracial dating, trans-racial adoptions, and multiracial families are more accepted, what impact does the media's promotion of beauty standards have on how we feel about our own and other's race and skin color. This audience-driven workshop promises to explore how we "see" skin color and how our experiences, past and present, inform a more challenging and layered understanding of what racism and skin color have to do with dividing or building community.

The "Class" Closet: Being "Out" about Race and Class

The "class" closet - why is class background never really discussed? What is the relationship between race and class? Come join us in opening the last closet door...let's bring "class" back into the classroom. In this interactive workshop, a color line and class disclosure will provide a unique opportunity to understand ourselves and the impact of class and race on our work in People of Color, White, and multiracial communities.

Session III

Homophobia/Heterosexism 101:

For Straights ONLY...and anyone else who ever thought they were!

An introspective, challenging, and engaging safe space where earliest memories, fears and apprehensions, and self-initiated disclosure will form the medium from which we will explore the root causes of homophobia and heterosexism and the all-to-often failure to recognize their interconnection to sexism and misogyny.

Sex and Gender: the underpinnings of Sexism and Misogyny?

What is the difference between sex and gender? Where do decisions about gender and gender identity promote liberation and freedom of choice but also perpetuate rigid gender conformity. How can what we learn from transgender and intersex communities, inform more effective and substantive strategies to ending sexism and misogyny.

Session IV

Model Minority or Manipulated Minority?

— The History of Racism in the U.S.: an Asian American Perspective

Through a quote, slide show, and 10-foot multiracial history time line, we will examine the origins of the "model minority" myth; explore the 170-year history of racism against Asians in the U.S.; see how racist media depictions of Black people (though political cartoons) were used to discredit and justify the exclusion of Asians from the U.S.; and better understand the ways Asians have been used to undermine other People of Color communities and movements for social change. In addition, the use of the multiracial history time line will reveal the interconnections of Native American, African American, Latina/o, Asian/Pacific Islander and Women's herstories/histories to more clearly substantiate the "changing face of racism" over the past 500 years in the United States and world-wide.

To registration and for more information, please email

donkao@projectreachnyc.org or socialjustice@projectreachnyc.org

Or call Project Reach - (212) 966-4227 or Don - (917) 749-6116

Send completed registration forms by **Tues, Feb 25, 2014** to **email: socialjustice@projectreachnyc.org**;

fax: (212) 966-4963 or **mail:** Project Reach, 39 Eldridge Street, 4th Floor, NYC 10002

Monday, February 25, 2014.

NYC City Council Hearing

The treatment of LGBTQA students, family & staff in the NYC public school system.

Hi, my name is Sarah Camiscoli and I teach ESL through writing and literature to 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 11th graders at the Bronx Academy of Letters in Mott Haven. I also co-facilitate the Gay Straight Alliance with powerful educators and students. I identify as gay.

Several weeks ago, while proctoring a middle school exam, I smiled and waved at one of the more unique, effeminately dressed young men in the 6th grade. Though he is not one of my students, we often greet one another in recognition. After we performed our usual acknowledgement, I complimented his new aqua green faux hawk hair-do. He smiled warmly and said, "You know, we're not normal, me and you." I paused, taken aback by his statement. He continued, "We're just not like other people. We don't dress or think like normal people." Taking this as an opportunity, I asked him to clarify the concept of "normal." "I don't know," he kept saying. "Just normal." And even though, after some persuasion, I was able to convince him that what wasn't "normal" about us was unique, fabulous, and "flawless" (a reference to a recent Beyoncé hit he thoroughly enjoyed), he felt strongly that normalcy at our school did not involve either one of us. And even though we left smiling, appreciating our difference, there was a part of me that felt unsettled about the conversation.

One week later, while cutting valentines during our high school Gay-Straight Alliance meeting, one of our fierce student facilitators asked, "You heard about that middle schooler? The little cute kid? He got jumped. Because they say he acts like a girl." After questioning the student further, I concluded that it was in fact the student who had spoken to me about normalcy the week before. And while I felt pained by the news, there was a strange irony at that moment. I was sitting only several feet away from a Respect for all Poster and in the midst of a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) meeting that was culminating in making valentines for the entire high school. There were clearly supports and spaces there for our LGBTQA community, but those spaces were not prevalent in our middle school and that support did not permeate school culture overall. We need to consider more deeply what it means to promote a culture of respect and acceptance in diverse schools.

I believe the Respect for All Campaign is a powerful and commendable initiative taken by the DOE to "promote respect" and "maintain a safe and supportive learning environment" for all students. But schools **don't** currently feel safe for all students and the programmatic supports that have been reviewed today don't reach those students. Many students don't feel "normal" and worry about their physical and emotional safety regardless of the number of trainings and curriculums sent to administrators and educators. Thus, maintenance of what we have now is not enough. If I were to give a recommendation for shifting school culture it would be to offer more earmarked funds to support administrators, teachers and students to implement these supports on a systemic level in their schools as they see fit. While trainings for staff, the designation of a RFA liaison, and awards granted to exemplary schools are commendable, many

Monday, February 25, 2014.

NYC City Council Hearing

The treatment of LGBTQA students, family & staff in the NYC public school system.

schools need more comprehensive budgets to promote this work. If the DOE wishes to promote respect for students despite their difference, schools need more funds allocated to facilitate the time and implementation of intentional moves to shift school culture. It is not so much my understanding or my colleagues' understanding of the challenges of LGBTQA youth that need development. Rather, the regular support that we are given to put that understanding into action is what needs to be developed.

For example, if our H.S. GSA had more funds made available by RFA to pay our GSA facilitators per-session for after school planning and to use as a budget for student-organized events, our H.S. students could plan events in our middle school. Earmarked per session could also be allocated to pay M.S. teachers to facilitate an effective, intentional program to intervene in the largely homophobic culture that our LGBTQA middle students combat daily. Really having Respect for All means shifting culture, and from my perspective, a dramatic shift in culture requires systemic change. In order for individuals to be a part of this change we need more regular time and resources. This means a more comprehensive, specifically earmarked budget in order for the implementation of this powerful initiative to be taken on by the teachers, students, and administrators who are the makers of school culture.

Thank you.

Contact:

Sarah Camiscoli

Ms.c.bronxletters@gmail.com

ESL coordinator, co-facilitator of Gay Straight Alliance

The Urban Assembly Bronx Academy of Letters

339 Morris Ave, Bronx, NY 10451

Mon Feb 25, 2014

NYC City Council Hearing – The treatment of LGBTQ students, family & staff in the NYC public school system

Hello. My name is Elana Eisen-Markowitz and I have been teaching high school social studies for eight years. I work at a small, non-charter, public school in the Mott Haven neighborhood of the Bronx. I am gay. I am genderqueer. And I am completely out in my work and in my life. I am fortunate to be here today – a school day – with 17 of my students, several members of our school's Gay Straight Alliance, colleagues from my school and around the city, and the blessing of my principal.

However, my experience isn't the norm in the city or even the norm in my school. What I have seen in my time as an educator, and what is reflected in the range of testimony today results from the lack of citywide policy and effective supports for LGBTQ individuals in New York City public schools.

Six years ago, a student came to me about an administrator in our school who was regularly using sexist and homophobic language to address our young people. I had the student write a report and we talked to our Respect For All representative – three times. Nothing happened. I didn't really know what I was doing and it felt like I was doing it alone. Ultimately, I took a big risk – as a second year, untenured teacher approaching my supervisor – and spoke directly to the administrator. The homophobic language certainly didn't stop entirely, but word got around to think twice about using that language at our school.

At the end of that year, students approached me to help them start our school's first Gay Straight Alliance. I knew and they knew that creating a space specifically for LGBTQ and Ally-identified members of our school community was necessary and *right*, but I was nervous. Again, I didn't really know what I was doing and it felt like I was doing it alone. Luckily, I found outside organizations like FIERCE, the Bronx Community Pride Center, GLSEN, and NYQueer to help me and my school.

There are two main messages in my story: **ONE)** I am fortunate. I *have* found places and people to support me and my school. Many more of my colleagues, my students and their

family members are now *out* as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and/or Queer, and are working to make our school a safer place for everyone. It has taken years to get here, but we've worked hard. And **TWO**) *We shouldn't have to work so hard* to find this support *on our own* and *outside of the school system*. NONE of the support we have at our school comes from formalized systems set up by the Department of Education or city policy. It's like a second full-time job just to feel safe. What if there were policies that required trainings about restorative approaches to intervene in LGBTQ bullying for all our staff and resources to make sure those trainings were prioritized? What if sex education classes were comprehensive and relevant to LGBTQ students? What if there was professional development money specifically earmarked to connect me to LGBTQ history materials for my U.S. History classroom...?

It cannot be all on *us* – individuals at the school level – to make change. Without systems in place to prioritize the work that many of us are already trying to do to make schools safer and more comfortable places for LGBTQ folks, sustained work as individual educators is *seriously* limited, if not nearly impossible.

Thank you.

Contact:

Elana Eisen-Markowitz

e.eisenmarkowitz@gmail.com

Social Studies Teacher, co-facilitator of the Gay Straight Alliance, part-time Restorative Approaches coordinator & UFT Chapter Leader

at

The Urban Assembly Bronx Academy of Letters
339 Morris Ave Bronx, NY 10451

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 2/25/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eli Szenes-Strauss

Address: 79 Clifton Place Brooklyn 11238

I represent: /

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alim Gafar, CPAC, co-chair

Address: _____

I represent: CPAC

Address: _____

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 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Martin Krongold

Address: 292 Martin Ave. S.F. NY 10314

I represent: City of the Council on High Schools

Address: Tweed Bldg.

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Rabbi (PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Steven Burg

Address: 226 East 42nd Street

I represent: Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 02/25/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Patricia Crispino

Address: 52 Broadway

I represent: United Federation of Teachers

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Milagros Rodriguez

Address: 125 Barclay Street

I represent: Local 372 - DC 37

Address: 125 Barclay St, NYC

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CONNIE CUTLER

Address: _____

I represent: DOE OFFICE OF SAFETY & YOUTH

Address: DEVELOPMENT

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kathleen Grimm

Address: Deputy Chancellor

I represent: DIVISION OF OPERATIONS, NYCDOE

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elayna Konstan, CEO

Address: DOE

I represent: Office of Safety + Youth Development

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 2/25/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Anthony Minerva

Address: 351 E. 41st St Apt 2D NY, NY 10009

I represent: Queer teachers

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jeff Levin

Address: 208 West 13th Street

I represent: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
Community Center

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Robin Mank

Address: 58-10 31st Avenue NY

I represent: FIERCE

Address: 147 W 24th St 6th Flr

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 2-26-14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Abraham McFee

Address: 790 Riverside Drive apt. 10B

I represent: The Hettricks Martin Institute

Address: 2 Astor Place

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Yanzhu (Caron) Chen

Address: 465 58th St, FL3 Brooklyn, 11220

I represent: Coalition for Asian American Children and family

Address: 50 Board St, 1871

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Johanna Miller

Address: jmillere@nyclu.org

I represent: NYCLU

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rocco Sanabria

Address: 47-57 59th Street Woodside NY 11377

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ALLAN FEINBLUM

Address: 1342 E 18th St

I represent: ~~NYC~~ NYC Fair Action Coalition

Address: 1342

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bryan Ellcott

Address: 2 Wilson Ave SI NY 10308

I represent: QEP

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 02/25/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sterling Roberson

Address: 52 Broadway

I represent: United Federation of Teachers

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eduardo Flores

Address: _____

I represent: Student, Make the Road

Address: _____ NY

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kimberly Espinoza

Address: _____

I represent: student, Make the Road NY

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: THOMAS KREVER (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: HETRICK - MARTIN INSTITUTE

Address: 740 BROADWAY, NY 10003

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Julian Padilla (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: Staff, Make the Road NY

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

Date: 2/25/2014

Name: Dr. Elizabeth Payne (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: Syracuse, NY

I represent: QUERI - Queering Education Research

Address: Institute at Syracuse Univ.

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ricardo Molina

Address: _____

I represent: Student, Make the Road NY

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Donnao

Address: 742 E. 67th St #10 NYC 10009

I represent: Project Reach

Address: 39 Eldridge St 4th Fl NYC 10002

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: Feb 25, 2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MARCELO MAIA

Address: 621 E 11th St #3A

I represent: ACT UP / NY

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: February 25th

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ronaldo Carhuarica

Address: 75-05 Utopia Pkwy, 11 366 Queens NY

I represent: Project Reach

Address: 39 Eldridge St FIVE NYC
10002

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jonathan Long

Address: 16 W 22nd Street, 4th Floor

I represent: Empire State Pride Agenda

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/25/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Maisie Baranian

Address: 68 10 102nd Street apt 12E Forest Hills, NY 11375

I represent: Forest Hills High School Gay Straight Alliance

Address: 67-01 110th Street Forest Hills, NY 11375

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 2/25/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ELANA EISEN-MARKOWITZ

Address: 339 Morris Ave Bronx NY 10451

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/25/13

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sarah Camiscoli

Address: 35-52 34th St, Queens, NY

I represent: Bronx Academy of Letters

Address: 339 Morris Ave, Bronx, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Josh Terefe

Address: 567 West 170 St Apt #4D

I represent: Ali Forney Center

Address: 321 W 125 St New York, NY,

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2-25-14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jose Rodriguez

Address: 339 Morris Av Bronx NY 10451

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

Date: 2/25/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LUKE CASOL

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Museum School

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 2/25/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Darren Hoke

Address: 321 West 125th St

I represent: Al P. Forney Center

Address: 321 West 125th St N.Y. N.Y.

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms