Georgia Coalition for Education Justice Supports LGBTQ+ Students

February 21, 2024

We, the undersigned members of the Georgia Coalition for Education Justice, an organization of more than 200 students, parents, teachers, educators, and advocates, denounce the Georgia General Assembly’s continued attacks on LGBTQ+ students in our schools. As an organization committed to promoting inclusivity, diversity, and equity in education across the state of Georgia, we believe it is imperative to advocate for the rights and well-being of all students.

It is essential to recognize that transgender and non-binary students have the same rights as their peers to access quality education in a safe and supportive learning environment. Any legislation that seeks to marginalize or exclude these students undermines their dignity, autonomy, and right to equal treatment under the law.

A CDC study on youth behavior recently showed that affirming and inclusive school environments positively impact the academic achievement, mental health, and overall well-being of students (Wilkins et al., 2021). It has also been shown that targeted interventions to support LGBTQ+ and transgender students lowered rates of bullying and violence for LGBTQ+ students and their heterosexual peers (Clayton et al., 2021; Kaczkowski, 2022).

We stand united in our opposition to the following bills in the state legislature and ask our state legislators to vote NO on these harmful bills that contribute to the increasingly hostile environment toward trans and nonbinary students and would make Georgia public schools less safe for all students.

- Senate Bill 88 sponsored by Sen. Carden Summers (R-13)
- Senate Bill 438 sponsored by Sen. Carden Summers (R-13)
- House Bill 836 sponsored by Chairman Mitchell Scoggins (R-14)
- House Bill 936 sponsored by Chairman Josh Bonner (R-73)
- House Bill 1045 sponsored by Rep. David Clark (R-100)

It is incumbent upon us as educators, policymakers, and advocates to create safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments where all students can thrive and reach their full potential.
We call on our state’s education leaders to cease their persecution of one of our most vulnerable student populations and instead focus on passing legislation that creates safe, nurturing learning environments that actively promote inclusive curricula and educational materials that reflect the diversity of human experiences and identities. This should include implementing comprehensive anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies, providing training and resources for staff on LGBTQ+-inclusive practices, establishing support groups and safe spaces for LGBTQ+ students, and ensuring access to affirming and culturally-competent mental health services. These educational practices represent our best chance to support students as they become engaged, compassionate, and capable citizens capable of creating success for themselves, our state, and the world.

For questions, please contact Mikayla Arciaga, MA.Ed., at mikayla.arciaga@idra.org.

*The Georgia Coalition for Education Justice, coordinated by IDRA, is a coalition of students, educators, parents, and advocates committed to advancing education justice for all children across the state.*

**Sources**

Signed,
Ben Ackerley
Leena Ali, Community Advocate - Chatham County
Cindy Battles
Nadia Behizadeh, Professor - DeKalb and Atlanta Public Schools
Cathryn Bergeman, Parent - Gwinnett County
Aero Bingham, Student - Gwinnett County
Candice Bizzell, Community Advocate - Gwinnett County
Jordan Black, Parent - Gwinnett
Margaret Bray, Educator
Nan Brown, Parent, Educator - Fulton County
Darian Burns, Community Advocate, Policy Analyst - Dekalb
Shelley Callico, Community Advocate, Parent - Cobb County
Jennifer Carpenter, Parent, Professor, Community Advocate - Gwinnett County Schools
Thomas Chapel, Parent, Atlanta
Harry Chiu, Community Advocate
Leah Clancy, Grandparent - Gwinnett County
Michelle Clark, Parent - Oconee County
Ellen Cotter, Parent - Sumter County
Thomas Cox, Parent, K12 Teacher - Gwinnett County
Alison Cundiff, Educator - DeKalb County
Amanda Dannemiller, Parent - Gwinnett County
Stephanie Davy-Jow, Student, Parent - Cobb
Malinda Day, Retired educator - Gwinnett County Public Schools
Jamie DiCarro, Parent, Educator, School Counselor
Diane Dougherty, Community Advocate, Gwinnett
Laura Fleming, Student
Sara Giordano, Professor - Atlanta Public Schools/Dekalb County
Sara Greene, Parent - Atlanta Public Schools
Shandrea Hardeman, Educator, Administrator, Fulton County & Atlanta Public Schools
Melissa Hardin, Parent, Community Advocate, QPR Team Lead (- Forsyth County
Amanda Harris, Parent - Henry County
Noël Heatherland, Social Worker - Fulton County
Robert Helfenbein, PhD, Professor - Fulton County
Harmony Herndon, Parent - East Jackson
Debbie Hernick, Educator - Gwinnett County Public Schools
Bruce Johnston, Community Advocate
Tarece Johnson-Morgan, Educator, School Board Member - Gwinnett
Jeanne Kane, Community Advocate - Glynn County
Iva King, Community Advocate - Clarke
Muriel Knope, Community Advocate - DeKalb
Andrea Kramer, Community Advocate - Paulding
Judy Kreps
Amy Lambert, Parent - Atlanta Public Schools
Amanda Lee, Parent, Educator - Fulton County
Sheila Levy, Parent - Dekalb County
Kerrie Lynn, Educator - Decatur
Jennifer Mason, Educator - Gwinnett County
Moki Macias, Parent - Fulton County, Atlanta Public Schools
Laura Miessner, Community Advocate - Lumpkin County
Candice D. McKinley, Parent - DeKalb County
Michelle Mickens Parent, Educator (K12), Community Advocate - Wilkes County
Nicole Miles
Ann Miller, Community Advocate - Fulton County
Erin Moore, Parent - Gwinnett County
Erin Murphy, Parent, Community Advocate - Gwinnett County
Tracey Nance
Catherine Nunziata, Parent - Forsyth County
Ogechi Oparah, Community Advocate - Fayette County
Marjorie Pak
Matéo Penado
Jonathan Peraza, Educator - DeKalb County Schools
Anna Purcella-Doll, Educator - Forsyth County
Randall Ramirez, Parent
Emily Ramirez, Parent
Michael Ray, Educator, Administrator - Atlanta Public Schools
Socks Rizk, Community Advocate
Christina Rogers, Parent - Marietta City school district
Laura Ross, Administrator - Gwinnett County
Rebecca Rubin, Parent - Gwinnett
Melissa Schellenberg, Parent, Educator - Gwinnett County
Rev. Michael J. Schulte, Community Advocate, LGBTQ-Affirming Lutheran Pastor - Fulton County
Jennifer Slipakoff, Parent - Cobb County
Lisa Stamey, Community Advocate - Fulton
Ashley Stegall, Educator
Joanne Stein, Parent, Community Advocate - Gwinnett County
Anne Stephens
Betty Stevens, Community Advocate - Dekalb County
Sheri Mann Stewart
Jane Story, Parent, Educator - Gwinnett County Public Schools
Samantha Tulloch, Student
Elizabeth Wagner, Parent - Gwinnett County
Michael Wagner, Parent - Gwinnett County
Leah Weingast, Community Advocate
Mauree Whitaker, Parent, Community Advocate - Oconee County
Kelly White, Parent - Chatham County
Tomiyo Williams, Community Advocate - Fulton County
Elroi Windsor, Professor, Administrator, Community Advocate - Fulton County
Beverly Wynne, Community Advocate - Cobb County
Janet Ziffer, Parent - DeKalb