



Testimony on SB 52 – Senate Education Committee

February 2, 2021

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen, Sen. Gelser, Sen. Gorsek and Sen. Robinson-

We are submitting testimony in support of SB52 on behalf of the Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide. We believe that it is essential for schools to affirm *all* young people and to be protective environments where young people can learn, find community and feel safe. Unfortunately, there is much evidence that this is not the experience of many LGBTQ2SIA students. This is especially important as according to the Healthy Teens Survey, 22% of 11th grade students in Oregon identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or unsure

The Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide includes 48 members who are leaders from the public and private sectors, legislators such as Sen. Sara Gelser, subject matter experts, suicide attempt and loss survivors, and young people from across the state of Oregon. The Alliance was developed as a result of the state's 5-year Youth Suicide Intervention and Prevention Plan to monitor and coordinate statewide suicide prevention. SB52 aligns with the plan's Strategic Direction 1: Healthy and Empowered Communities.

We know that LGBTQ2SIA youth do well when they are affirmed and experience acceptance. In fact, the Family Acceptance Project has shown that even small moves to decrease rejecting behaviors or increase accepting behaviors of the adults in the lives of young people, results in more positive health outcomes. Yet, as summarized in the LGBTQ2SIA Student Success Plan, about 60% LGBTQ+ 8th and 11th graders experienced bullying in the last month, as compared to 20% of cisgender and straight students and twice as many trans/non-binary youth experienced bullying, as compared to cisgender youth. A sobering 50% of LGBTQ+ 8th graders in Oregon have considered suicide and 30% have attempted.

We can do better. We also believe passage of SB52 will prevent suicides. It builds on the important guidance document developed by the Oregon Department of Education and an LGBTQ2SIA advisory group. It lays out a way forward for Oregon schools to systemically address current disparities and create not only a safe environment for LGBTQ2SIA youth, but one where they and all students can thrive.

Sincerely,

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