

SB 52: Statewide Education Plan for LGBTQIA Students

Senate Education Committee

February 3, 2021

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen, and members of the committee,

My name is Jon Bridges. I am an administrator in the Beaverton School District, but the testimony I am submitting is as an individual in support of SB 52.

The development and implementation of a statewide education plan for LGBTQIA students is long overdue.

I appreciate the consultation requirements in the development and implementation of the plan. Hearing diverse voices representative of students of color is particularly important due to the effects of the intersectionality of race/ethnicity and LGBTQIA. I would suggest that the plan would be stronger if these groups were consulted during the development and implementation of the plan.

The plan requirements outlined in sections 3 and 4 are rigorous and comprehensive. Based on my experience, I am skeptical that there is sufficient data on LGBTQIA students to support development of plans to address each required element. In our district, we do not know the attendance rates, discipline rates, or academic achievement of our LGBTQIA students. In our annual anonymous student survey of middle and high school students, students can indicate if they are a member of the LGBTQ community. From our most recent high school student survey we learned:

- Compared to their non-LGBTQ peers, our district's high school students who identify as LGBTQ report lower participation rates in athletics, higher participation rates in extra-curricular activities, and similar rates of participation in service learning opportunities.
- Our LGBTQ high school students report experiencing "a lot" of bullying at school, on the way to or from school, and online at rates 2-3 times that of their non-LGBTQ peers.

On many other survey measures, there is little difference between our LGBTQIA students and students who do not identify as LGBTQIA. Examples of these measures include connection to school, teacher expectations, and post-secondary plans.

The development and implementation of strategies to address all of the plan requirements may not be supported by data. Some flexibility in the plan requirement might increase the likelihood of plan implementation and positive outcomes for LGTBQIA youth in Oregon schools.

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of Senate Bill 52.