
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

February 3, 2021

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon respectfully requests the committee's support of SB 52, which seeks to implement an LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan for Oregon's students. We applaud the Oregon Department of Education for prioritizing the need to better support Oregon's LGBTQ2SIA+ youth by bringing this proactive piece of legislation.

In their 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results and Trend Report, the CDC found that significantly higher percentages of lesbian, gay, or bisexual students (10.0%) and students not sure of their sexual identity (10.7%) missed school during the past month because of safety concerns than heterosexual students (6.1%), and that 33% of lesbian, gay, or bisexual students were bullied at school as compared to 17.1% of heterosexual students.¹ The CDC also reported that a significantly higher percentages of lesbian, gay, or bisexual students (38.0%) and students not sure of their sexual identity (25.6%) made a suicide plan than heterosexual students (10.4%), and that 7.5% of lesbian, gay, or bisexual students and 5.6% of students not sure of their sexual identity were injured in a suicide attempt as compared to 1.7% of heterosexual students.²

Here in Oregon, the 2017 Oregon Healthy Teens Survey uncovered alarming data that nearly half of lesbian, gay or bisexual 8th-graders have contemplated suicide. That same year, the Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition found that close to half of transgender-identifying youth and just under half of LGBT youth indicated suicidal ideation and that LGBT youth are up to three times more likely to miss school based on reasonable fears of bullying, harassment, or intimidation. While the passage of Adi's Act (SB 52) in 2019 addressed the dire numbers of LGBTQ students dealing with suicidal ideation by developing a model suicide prevention policy for all of Oregon's school districts, we know that it is not enough for our students to just survive, they deserve every opportunity to thrive.

There is a clear and urgent need to address school climate, safety, and inclusivity concerns for LGBTQ students. The GLSEN's 2017 National School Climate Survey found that most LGBTQ students regularly heard anti-LGBTQ remarks and experienced anti-LGBTQ victimization at Oregon schools, and that only 3 out of 10 Oregon LGBTQ students said they were taught positive representations of LGBTQ figures, history, or events with inclusive curriculum. Furthermore, fewer than 2 out of 10 reported receiving inclusive sex education in school.³

GLSEN's survey also suggests that inclusive comprehensive sex education (along with other school-wide resources, such as Gay-Straight Alliances and anti-harassment policies) is linked to reduced bullying and better outcomes for students. These data show how incredibly important it is to ensure that Oregon's health education standards are fully implemented per the law's requirements, which includes each school district having a plan of instruction and curriculum that is LGBTQ+ inclusive; includes information about sexual and reproductive health; consent; healthy relationships; and bullying and school safety.

Studies show that comprehensive sex education programs not only improve health outcomes, they help prevent child abuse, sexual violence, and gender-based discrimination. Comprehensive sex education and healthy relationship training improves socio-emotional well-being by teaching skills related to building safe and positive relationships, understanding and accepting difference, challenging bias, resolving conflict, making healthy

¹ CDC (2017). Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results and Trend Report. Available online at: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/pdf/trendsreport.pdf>.

² Ibid.

³ GLSEN (2017). 2017 State Snapshot of School Climate in Oregon. Available online at: https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Oregon_Snapshot_2017_0.pdf

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decisions, and defining and promoting enthusiastic consent practices that empower youth and help keep them healthy and safe.⁴

While Oregon is a leader in its comprehensive sex education laws and standards, our statutes include no repercussions for noncompliance, and there is no budget attached to the bill, which means there is no funding allocated for supporting districts in implementation, or monitoring implementation, except for the .5 FTE that the Department of Education allocates to issues related to sex education in Oregon. An unknown number of school districts throughout the state do not fully implement the law, either by omitting sex education entirely from their curriculum, implementing curricula that are not considered comprehensive, or passing policies that make it challenging for sex educators to do their jobs. In a 2019 survey, the Oregon Health Authority found that only 35 school districts reported having the required plan of instruction for sex ed, while 162 districts either did not reply or did not have a plan of instruction.⁵ Across all the districts that replied to the survey, the top barrier to being in compliance with the law was a lack of adequate funding. The other top two barriers that districts identified were lack of curriculum guidance and lack of training.⁶ All three barriers are related to a lack of adequate funding and resources that directly impacts the ability of school districts to adopt and implement health education curriculum that is intersectional, trauma responsive, LGBTQ inclusive, science-based, age and developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, affirming, non-judgmental, racially-just, gender inclusive, rights-based, medically accurate, non-binary, and stigma-free.

SB 52 endeavors to address the frightening statistics reflecting our LGBTQ youth's experience in schools. The LGBTQ Student Success Plan will bring a comprehensive approach to supporting these youth by promoting supportive and inclusive school policies; providing professional development for school staff on LGBTQ student issues; providing equitable access to appropriate educational curriculum, facilities and activities; and regularly collecting necessary data to inform future decisions. A critical component of creating a safer school climate for LGBTQ youth is providing health education to all students that is inclusive of LGBTQ identities and experiences in order to break down stigma, challenge bias, cultivate understanding and accepting difference, and build respectful and safe relationships.

Like any student, when LGBTQ youth feel supported, seen, and affirmed, they flourish. And it's clear that this is something every student, no matter who they love or how they identify, deserves. Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon urges you to support SB 52 for the future of Oregon's youth.

Sincerely,

An Do
Interim Executive Director
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

⁴ <https://siecus.org/sex-ed-is-a-vehicle-for-social-change/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=cc47263d-030b-4433-bd66-fd1e3fd26f45>

⁵ <https://geo.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=4bf3974813d4436793660897cb923311>

⁶ <https://geo.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=4bf3974813d4436793660897cb923311>