



February 2, 2021

Oregon Senate Committee on Education  
900 Court Street NE,  
Salem, OR 97301

**Re: SB 52**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the Committee on Education.

GLSEN is the leading national organization on LGBTQ+ issues in K-12 education. We believe that all students deserve a safe and affirming school environment regardless of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression and that K-12 learning communities should be places of liberation where all students can thrive and achieve their full potential. Further, GLSEN's Oregon Chapter has been engaged in this work all across the state since 1997, and has been a long-time supporter of the Oregon Department of Education's efforts to ensure that the state is a national leader in ensuring safe and affirming schools for LGBTQ+ students. Based on twenty years of GLSEN's National School Climate data and as many years of local work through our Oregon Chapter, we believe there is a critical need for this legislation.

GLSEN's decades of research demonstrates definitively that anti-LGBTQ+ bias in the form of discriminatory school policies and peer to peer bullying and harassment impede LGBTQ+ students' safety and ability to thrive in their K-12 learning communities. Oregon specific data from our most recent National School Climate Survey bears out the necessity for a statewide LGBTQ2SIA+ student success plan.

The majority of LGBTQ+ students in Oregon report regularly hearing anti-LGBTQ+ remarks in school, including 88% of students hearing the word "gay" used with a negative connotation, 71% reporting hearing other homophobic remarks, 75% hearing remarks that are negative about gender expression, and 62% hearing negative remarks about transgender people. Some students also reported hearing negative remarks from staff that were homophobic (15%) or negatively regarding someone's gender expression (30%). LGBTQ+ students in Oregon schools also report disconcerting rates of harassment and assault in their K-12 learning communities based specifically on the victim's sexual orientation, gender or gender expression. In terms of victimization based on sexual orientation, 63% of Oregon students in the survey reported verbal harassment, 23% physical harassment, and 12% physical assault. With regard to gender



expression the percentage of students reporting victimization for the same measures was 53%, 23%, and 14% respectively, and for gender it was 56%, 23% and 11% respectively. Many of the students surveyed also reported victimization based on other, intersecting identities including 23% of students reporting race or ethnicity-based victimization, 39% reporting mistreatment on the basis of being a person with a disability, and 20% reporting victimization based on their religion.

Additionally, many Oregon LGBTQ+ students reported discriminatory policies or practices at their school, including being disciplined for public displays of affection that did not result in similar punishment for non-LGBTQ+ students (24%), transgender students being unable to use the school bathroom aligned with their gender 44%, and being prevented from using their chosen name or pronouns school (17% of LGBTQ+ students overall and 33% of transgender students specifically).

Moreover, through our research we have identified four core supports that improve school climates and outcomes for LGBTQ+ students: inclusive and supportive school policies, supportive school personnel, access to supportive student clubs such as GSAs (Gay Straight Alliances or Gender and Sexuality Alliances), and LGBTQ+ inclusive curricular resources. Yet our findings in Oregon indicate that many LGBTQ+ students in the state do not have access to these vital in-school resources. Specifically, only 23% of students surveyed reported they are aware of their school having a comprehensive anti-bullying and harassment policy that specifically protects students based on sexual orientation and gender identity and only 56% of students reported that their school administration was somewhat or very supportive of LGBTQ+ students. While 99% of students could identify at least one school staff member who was supportive of LGBTQ+ students, a smaller proportion (79%) could identify six or more such staff members. And finally, access to GSAs or similar student clubs was reported by 80% of students, but only 32% reported positive representations of LGBTQ+ people in their school curriculum, and only 19% reported receiving LGBTQ+ inclusive sex education in school.

With this data in mind, GLSEN National and GLSEN Oregon fully support the enactment of SB 52 in support of an LGBTQ2SIA+ student success plan for the state. Through the student success plan Oregon could improve the implementation of supportive and inclusive school policies, including comprehensive anti-bullying and harassment policies, inclusive curricular standards, and specific transgender and nonbinary student nondiscrimination policies. The success plan could also increase professional development opportunities for K-12 staff, increasing the number of adults in K-12 communities to whom LGBTQ+ students can turn for support. Finally,



a statewide LGBTQIA+ success plan could increase adoption of inclusive curricular resources as well as improve access to GSAs.

Enacting SB 52 would be an important step forward in dismantling the barriers to LGBTQ+ students' achievement and wellbeing in K-12 learning communities across Oregon while also creating the affirming supports that we know help students thrive and reach their full potential. We hope that the information and data we provided today can be of use in this critical work to create an equitable, just, and affirming K-12 system for LGBTQ+ students in Oregon. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony before the Committee. Should you have any questions about the above information, please feel free to reach out to Tessa Juste, State and Local Policy Manager, via email at [tessa.juste@glsen.org](mailto:tessa.juste@glsen.org).

Sincerely,

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