



Department of Education Studies

UOTeach: MEd in Curriculum and Teaching
CTEd: MEd in Curriculum and Teacher Education

Date: February 2, 2021
To: Oregon Senate Education Committee
From: Julia Heffernan
Re: Support for SB 52

This is a letter of support for Senate Bill 52. I am writing as a former Oregon middle and high school teacher, a parent of a gender diverse Oregon high school student, a professional teacher educator, and a community advocate for Oregon's LGBTQ+ student population. I first became aware of the educational limitations and unsafe education environment for LGBTQ+ youth as a middle school teacher.

Upon entering the classroom as a teacher 25 years ago, I witnessed the systemic educational challenges facing LGBTQ+ youth in our schools. Some of the issues that became visible to me were homophobic bullying, campus-based biased assaults, invisibility in all curriculum, invisibility in all education enrichment, untrained education staff, hostile education staff, an unsafe workplace for LGBTQ+ professionals and limited education policy interventions. These concerns from 25 years ago still persist in Oregon as can be seen in the most recent 2020 OSSCC Annual Safe Schools Report.

In the years since entering my first classroom I have completed research on public education exclusion of LGBTQ+ youth, established an annual LGBTQ+ youth leadership summit (UOTeachOUT), established LGBTQ+ inclusive teacher education, provided five annual statewide reports for Oregon (OSSCC Safe Schools Report), served on state and national education equity committees, established parent support/advocacy groups, and provided countless trainings to educators.

What I have learned from this career of equity advocacy and intervention is that **equity issues in education must be addressed by education professionals and addressed within the systems inside of the school.** While parents, advocates and academics can act from their community positions to influence Oregon's public education, it is critical that we as a state place the professional expectation for both full inclusion and fundamental safety of our LGBTQ+ students on the public-school professionals and systems.

I believe SB 52 establishes a supportive framework for Oregon educators to transform both education policy and professional practice to improve the lives and educational outcomes of these valuable students.

Thank you,

Julia Heffernan, PhD.
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Co-Director, UOTeachOUT LGBTQ+ Youth Leadership Education Summit
Co-author, OSSCC Annual Oregon Safe Schools Report
Facilitator, UOTeachOUT Tran*Parent Support Group for Parents with Gender Diverse Youth

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