



TO: House Committee on Education  
FROM: Todd Addams, Interim Executive Director, Basic Rights Oregon  
DATE: 2/8/2023  
RE: Support for HB 2656

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Hudson and Wright and members of the House Committee on Education,

I am writing on behalf of Basic Rights Oregon to ask you to vote YES on advancing House Bill 2656. Basic Rights Oregon is the state's advocacy organization for LGBTQ2SIA+ Oregonians, and we believe this bill will further our goal of creating affirming educational spaces for all Oregon youth.

Test scores, graduation rates and attendance are all important measures of statewide academic success—but they don't reflect the entire picture of how Oregon schools are serving students, particularly more vulnerable students like our LGBTQ2SIA+ youth. We also need to know if students feel safe, healthy, and happy.

This is where the Student Educational Equity & Development Survey and the Student Health Survey (SEED and SHS) come in. By tracking data like bullying and harassment, these surveys give us insights into how our schools are serving vulnerable youth, and point to where we need to act to make change. According to the Trevor Project, only 47 of Oregon LGBTQ2SIA+ youth find school to be an affirming space—clearly, there is much room for Oregon to grow in this area.

Currently, only 32 percent of Oregon school districts participate in SEED and SHS. Basic Rights Oregon supports HB 2656, which will make these surveys mandatory for all Oregon school districts. This bill will get us closer to ensuring all youth have the welcoming school environment they deserve.

Other state legislatures across the country are advancing legislation making schools less safe and less welcoming for LGBTQ2SIA+ students and other underserved youth. With HB 2656, Oregon has an opportunity to buck that trend and continue investing in safe and affirming school environments.

We hope you will vote YES on HB 2656, so all Oregon students have a chance to thrive. Thank you!