



HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
CAMPAIGN®

March 14, 2014

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights organization, and its more than 1.5 million members and supporters nationwide, I urge you to co-sponsor the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA), H.R. 1652, and to support its inclusion in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

Students who are LGBT or perceived to be LGBT are subject to well-documented, pervasive discrimination, including harassment, bullying, intimidation and violence. These students are deprived of equal educational opportunities in schools across our nation. According to a recent survey, 51 percent of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed at school, 48 percent say they are often excluded by their peers and 17 percent report being physically attacked because they are different. Issues of discrimination, harassment and bullying are devastating for students and our nation. Numerous social science studies demonstrate that discrimination at school has contributed to high rates of absenteeism, dropout, adverse health consequences and academic under-achievement among LGBT youth. When left unchecked, such discrimination can lead to – and has led to – dangerous situations for youth.

Federal statutory protections address discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex and disability. Unfortunately, federal civil rights laws do not expressly protect students from discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Decades of civil rights history show that civil rights laws are effective in decreasing discrimination against specific vulnerable groups. It is time that we extend these laws to protect our LGBT youth.

The SNDA prohibits public schools from discriminating against any student on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. It allows an aggrieved individual to assert a violation of these prohibitions in a judicial proceeding. In addition, it allows federal authorities to address discrimination made unlawful by the bill. The SNDA is modeled after Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. §§ 1681-1688), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and provides legal recourse to redress such discrimination.

No administrator, teacher or school staff would be able to turn a blind eye when a student is being bullied or harassed because of his or her actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. The SNDA makes school districts responsible for preparing staff to deal with bullying and harassment of LGBT youth or those perceived to be LGBT.

We urge you to support and co-sponsor the SNDA. For more information, please contact me at (202) 216-1515 or [Allison.Herwitt@hrc.org](mailto:Allison.Herwitt@hrc.org), David Stacy, Government Affairs Director, at (202) 572-8959 or [David.Stacy@hrc.org](mailto:David.Stacy@hrc.org) or Jennifer Pike, Public Policy Advocate, at (202) 772-3882 or [Jennifer.Pike@hrc.org](mailto:Jennifer.Pike@hrc.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allison Herwitt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Allison Herwitt  
Vice President for Government Affairs



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Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights organization, and its more than 1.5 million members and supporters nationwide, I urge you to co-sponsor the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA), H.R. 1199, and to support its inclusion in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA).

Bullying and harassment of LGBT students, as well as students perceived to be LGBT, is widespread. When left unchecked, such bullying and harassment can and has led to dangerous situations for youth. While current federal law provides important support to promote school safety, it does not comprehensively and expressly focus on bullying or harassment and in no way addresses the unique challenges faced by LGBT youth.

The SSIA would amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to require school districts in states that receive ESEA funds to adopt codes of conduct specifically prohibiting bullying and harassment, including on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and religion. The bill would also require schools to collect data on incidences and responses, and require the Department of Education to report these findings to Congress every two years, ensuring that schools are held accountable for their actions.

The best way to improve schools and educational outcomes for all students is to create safe learning environments. While non-LGBT youth identified classes/exams/grades (25 percent), college/career (14 percent) and financial pressures (11 percent) as the top three problems they face, LGBT youth identified family rejection (26 percent), school bullying problems (21 percent) and fear of being out or open (18 percent) as top issues. It is our responsibility to ensure that all of our children, including LGBT students, experience safe and intellectually stimulating environments fostered by school districts across the country. We urge you to support and co-sponsor the SSIA.

For more information, please contact me at (202) 216-1515 or [Allison.Herwitt@hrc.org](mailto:Allison.Herwitt@hrc.org), David Stacy, Government Affairs Director, at (202) 572-8959 or [David.Stacy@hrc.org](mailto:David.Stacy@hrc.org) or Jennifer Pike, Public Policy Advocate, at (202) 772-3882 or [Jennifer.Pike@hrc.org](mailto:Jennifer.Pike@hrc.org).

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Bullying and harassment of LGBT students, as well as students perceived to be LGBT, is widespread. When left unchecked, such bullying and harassment can and has led to dangerous situations for youth. While current federal law provides important support to promote school safety, it does not comprehensively and expressly focus on bullying or harassment and in no way addresses the unique challenges faced by LGBT youth.

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Sincerely,

Allison Herwitt

Vice President for Government Affairs



March 18, 2014

Dear Representative:

**RE: ACLU Urges Support and Co-Sponsorship of the Student Non-Discrimination Act (H.R. 1652)**

On behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), a non-partisan organization with more than a half million members, countless additional activists and supporters, and fifty-three affiliates nationwide, we write to urge you to support and cosponsor the Student Non-Discrimination Act (H.R. 1652). This legislation, which was introduced by Representative Jared Polis (D-CO), would provide lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (“LGBT”) students with long overdue and much needed explicit federal protections by establishing a comprehensive prohibition against discrimination and harassment in all public elementary and secondary schools across the country based on a student’s actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

There is a clear and compelling need for this legislation. Discrimination, harassment, and even physical abuse, are often part of LGBT students’ daily lives at school. A nationwide 2011 survey of more than 8,500 students between the ages of 13-20 found that eight out of ten LGBT students reported experiencing harassment at their school within the past year based on their sexual orientation.<sup>1</sup> Six in ten LGBT students reported feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation.<sup>2</sup> Transgender students experienced more hostile climates than their non-transgender peers, with eight in ten reporting feeling unsafe at school because of their gender expression.<sup>3</sup> The effect of a hostile school climate on LGBT students has a direct and negative impact on the student’s education. Nearly a third of LGBT students reported skipping at least once, and three in ten reported missing at least one entire day of school in the past month because of safety concerns.<sup>4</sup>

These sobering statistics are representative of intakes the ACLU’s LGBT Project receives, including the following:

- California

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph G. Kosciw *et al.*, GLSEN, The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth in Our Nation’s Schools (2012), available at <http://glsen.org/nscls>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ROBERT REMAR  
TREASURER

A gay junior high student in Grass Valley was attacked at lunch by another boy because rumors were circulating that the gay student had a crush on the attacker. The other boy knocked the gay student down and shoved his face hard against the cement floor. The student reported that school administrators seemed more concerned about the rumors than about the physical assault.

- Indiana

A 16-year-old gay student in Jasper reported that one of his teachers muttered “faggot” under his breath every time the boy passed him in the hallway between classes. The student was too afraid of the teacher to report it to administrators.

A gay, Latino 10<sup>th</sup> grader in South Bend who had been harassed repeatedly and mercilessly by classmates reported that a school custodian, who was standing next to a security officer at the time, told the student that he had no reason to complain because, “Back home, you’d be killed for that.” In another incident, the boy was called to the assistant principal’s office because of a minor disagreement with another student, and the assistant principal instead focused on trying to get the student to tell him inappropriately intimate details about his personal life, saying, “We all have a dark side.”

- Texas

A gay high school junior in Magnolia was physically attacked by a girl at lunch who repeatedly and loudly called him a “faggot” throughout the assault. The boy did not want to hit her back, so he kept backing away, but she pursued him all the way out of the cafeteria, into the hallway, and some distance down the hallway, shouting and slapping him repeatedly the whole way. Finally, a teacher pulled the girl off him. When he complained to administrators, they told him there was “no way of proving” what he said had happened, and that they could not act on one student’s word against another’s in spite of the fact that the assault went on for several minutes in front of dozens of witnesses and multiple security cameras.

When students began spreading a rumor that a 14-year-old girl in Queen City was a lesbian, two teachers confronted the girl, asking her if the rumors were true and warned her that “the Bible forbids it.”

### **Issak Wolfe – One Transgender Student’s Experience with Discrimination**

On April 26, 2013, the ACLU and the ACLU of Pennsylvania sent a letter to the Red Lion Area School District on behalf of a male transgender student, Issak Wolfe, who was denied the opportunity to run for prom king by his school’s principal.<sup>5</sup> Issak’s classmates and most of his teachers supported and respected his male gender identity, and he had received repeated assurances that his name would appear on the prom king side of the ballot. However, when the ballot was released, Issak was dismayed and embarrassed to discover that he was listed as a candidate for prom queen and referred to by the female name he was assigned at birth instead of

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<sup>5</sup> Letter from Molly Tack-Hooper, ACLU of Pennsylvania to Dr. Scott A. Deisley, Superintendent, Red Lion Area Sch. Dist. (April 26, 2013) *available at* [http://www.aclupa.org/download\\_file/view\\_inline/1024/701/](http://www.aclupa.org/download_file/view_inline/1024/701/).



by his male name. He later learned from administrators that the decision was made by his principal because he “didn’t feel comfortable” with Issak running for prom king. This refusal to respect Issak’s gender identity caused him needless pain and embarrassment in front of his classmates.

While Issak was allowed to wear a black cap and gown at his graduation, instead of the yellow cap and gown mandated for girls, the school continued to disrespect his gender identity by refusing to allow him to use his male name in the ceremony. The school district also refused to adopt a non-discrimination policy to protect transgender students like Issak from future pain and humiliation.

### **Filling a Gap in Our Civil Rights Laws**

While federal laws currently protect students on the basis of race, color, sex, disability, and national origin, no federal statute explicitly protects students on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. The Student Non-Discrimination Act would do just that, and fill an unacceptable gap in our civil rights laws that leave LGBT students vulnerable to discrimination and harassment.

Fifty years of civil rights history demonstrate that laws similar to the Student Non-Discrimination Act are effective in preventing discrimination and harassment from occurring in the first place by prompting schools to take proactive steps to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for all students who are in their care.

### **Protecting Students While Upholding Freedom of Speech**

The ACLU is a unique organization in that it is committed to defending and preserving the sometimes conflicting individual rights and liberties that the Constitution and laws of the United States guarantee to everyone in this country. We vigorously support an expansive view of First Amendment rights under the U.S. Constitution to freedom of speech, association and assembly; freedom of the press; and freedom of religion. But we also work to extend rights to segments of the population that have traditionally been denied their rights, including people of color; women; immigrants; lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people; prisoners; and people with disabilities.

Some opponents of anti-harassment legislation contend that protections for students in public schools against discrimination are likely to run afoul of First Amendment free speech rights. Others who might support such legislation assert that speech can be restricted in order to provide adequate protection to all students. When carefully crafted, non-discrimination and anti-harassment policies can both protect students from abuse while also preserving core free speech rights.

The harassment definition in the Student Non-Discrimination Act is consistent with protections for the speech of public school students under the First Amendment. A school may restrict student speech only where the school has a specific fear of substantial disruption of the educational environment or intrusion upon the rights of others. Harassing conduct that does not

take the form of speech, and harassment carried out by teachers or staff – all of which is encompassed by the legislative definition within the Student Non-Discrimination Act – does not come within the First Amendment protections for student speech.

But in those instances when harassment takes the form of purely expressive conduct, the legislation proscribes only such conduct that is “sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive to limit a student’s ability to participate in or benefit from” the educational program. We understand this to mean that student speech may be actionable only where it is so severe, persistent, or pervasive as to cause a material interference with the student’s equal participation in or benefit from the educational program. By its definition, the legislation would not – as it cannot consistent with the Constitution – encompass speech that is merely offensive or that causes nothing more than hurt feelings. The legislation thus properly balances the competing speech and equal protection rights at issue. This standard is particularly appropriate because the government has a compelling interest in ensuring that students will not have their educational opportunities limited because of sexual orientation or gender identity.

In applying the harassment definition in this legislation, U.S. courts will apply the same objective standard that courts have applied in harassment cases brought under Title IX and other civil rights statutes. We anticipate that courts will limit liability to those instances in which the conduct would be considered harassment from the perspective of a reasonable person with the victim’s known, objective characteristics, including their sexual orientation or gender identity.

### **Conclusion**

The Student Non-Discrimination Act would have a profound impact in improving the lives of LGBT students in the U.S. by ensuring that discrimination and harassment of students on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity has no place in our country’s public elementary and secondary schools. It would do so in a way that preserves the right of all students to speak freely and the right of all students to benefit equally from the educational programs offered. We urge you to support and cosponsor the Student Non-Discrimination Act (H.R. 1652).

Sincerely,



Laura W. Murphy  
Director, Washington Legislative Office



Ian S. Thompson  
Legislative Representative



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Dear Senator:

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There is a clear and compelling need for this legislation. Discrimination, harassment, and even physical abuse, are often part of LGBT students’ daily lives at school. A nationwide 2011 survey of more than 8,500 students between the ages of 13-20 found that eight out of ten LGBT students reported experiencing harassment at their school within the past year based on their sexual orientation.<sup>1</sup> Six in ten LGBT students reported feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation.<sup>2</sup> Transgender students experienced more hostile climates than their non-transgender peers, with eight in ten reporting feeling unsafe at school because of their gender expression.<sup>3</sup> The effect of a hostile school climate on LGBT students has a direct and negative impact on the student’s education. Nearly a third of LGBT students reported skipping at least once, and three in ten reported missing at least one entire day of school in the past month because of safety concerns.<sup>4</sup>

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Director, Washington Legislative Office



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Legislative Representative



## League of United Latin American Citizens

March 18, 2014

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Ivonne Quiñones Lanzó  
Puerto Rico  
Eliá Mendoza  
Texas  
Salvador Lazalde  
Utah  
Bob Garcia  
Virginia  
Arturo Martinez, Ph.D.  
Wisconsin

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the nation's oldest and largest Latino civil rights organization, I write to urge you to support both the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA, H.R. 1199 & S. 403) and the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA, H.R. 1652 & S. 1088). SNDA classifies harassment as a form of discrimination and bans discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity from public schools. SSIA is a proposed amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that focuses on using local educational agencies to create policies that ensure harassment doesn't impede education.

Each time another news story comes out about the suicide of a gay teen, we must ask ourselves what we as a nation can do about it. Last year, I contacted your office about the tragedy of Carlos Vigil, a 17 year old Latino student from New Mexico, who committed suicide after posting a note on his Twitter account about the bullying he had suffered over the years. While not a solution to anti-gay prejudice, SNDA and SSIA represent a positive step forward in protecting our students from this kind of harassment. Both of these bills would help establish policies in schools across the nation that would help put an end to such egregious bullying. These bills are not only about the government offering protections, but they would also empower families to act in ensuring the safety of their children. As of now, families have limited or no recourse for putting an end to harassment against their child. These bills would give hope to parents worried about their kids and feeling powerless to help.

According to a study by the Center for Disease Control, lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are four times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight peers. This alarming statistic is connected to their school environments: each episode of LGBT victimization, such as physical or verbal harassment or abuse, increases the likelihood of self-harming behavior by 2.5 times on average. Children who feel unsafe at schools also have a hard time focusing on their studies, and suffer academically.

I am attaching to this letter the final message that Carlos imparted to the world, the note he tweeted just before taking his own life, along with an article, so that you may read for yourself about the circumstances of this incident and understand how it connects to these two bills. Each story such as Carlos' is one too many.

I thank you for your service and look forward to working with you as Congress continues to consider these crucial bills. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Luis Torres, Director of Policy and Legislation, at 202-833-6130, or by email at [latorres@lulac.org](mailto:latorres@lulac.org).

Sincerely,

Margaret Moran  
LULAC National President

---

**(No Subject)**

July 13, 2013, 3:06 PM

I'm sorry to those who I offended over the years. I'm blind to see that I, as a human being, suck. I'm an individual who is doing an injustice to the world and it's time for me to leave. Please don't ever feel sorry for me, or cry - because I had an opportunity at life and that opportunity is over. I'm sorry that I wasn't able to love someone or have someone love me. I guess it's best though, because now I leave no pain onto anyone. The kids in school are right, I am a loser, a freak, and a fag and in no way is that acceptable for people to deal with. I'm sorry for not being a person that would make someone proud.

**Image from Carlos' Twitter  
Posted July 13, 2013  
<https://twitter.com/Chillll>**

Hours later, the teen committed suicide.

As word spread Monday, local gay rights groups issued statements condemning bullying. Classmates of the teen have held fundraisers for the family.

Carlos was an active member at Warehouse 508, an Albuquerque safe haven where teens learn about art and culture. The organization is now offering grief counseling to other students, the teen's friends and his family.

Family members outside of Warehouse 508 declined an on-camera interview Monday but said they hope their son doesn't die in vain.

They are keeping his Twitter account open so his story can live on and so more people will be aware of the bullying problems in the community.

Read more: <http://www.koat.com/news/new-mexico/albuquerque/bullying-could-be-cause-behind-los-lunas-teens-suicide/-/9153728/20992392/-/ay2fv3z/-/index.html#ixzz2ZnU9IHJf>

## **“Bullying could be cause behind Los Lunas teen's suicide”**

**KOAT 7**

**July 15, 2013**

**By Tanya Mendis**

**LOS LUNAS, N.M.** —Bullies may have led a Los Lunas teen to take his own life this weekend.

Carlos Vigil was a 17-year-old Los Lunas High School student who had just returned from a trip out of state where friends said he spoke out against bullying.

On his Twitter account this weekend, he posted a chilling message that read: "The kids at school are right. I'm a loser, a freak ...and in no way is that acceptable for people to deal with."

Carlos claimed the kids called him gay slurs and he apologized for "not being a person that would make someone proud."





March 18, 2014

Dear Member of Congress:

In honor of next month's Day of Silence highlighting anti-LGBT bullying and harassment in schools,<sup>1</sup> and on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of People For the American Way (PFAW) members, we write in strong support of the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA, H.R. 1199 & S. 403) and the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA, H.R. 1652 & S. 1088). We thank the sponsors and cosponsors therein for addressing what has become a pervasive national problem,<sup>2</sup> and we urge all members of Congress to join them.

Following the increased media attention paid to bullying-related suicides in 2010, we took a strong stand on behalf of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students and those who are perceived to be LGBT. According to the 2011 National School Climate Survey:<sup>3</sup> 81.9 percent of LGBT students suffer verbal harassment, 38.3 percent physical harassment, and 18.3 percent physical assault because of their sexual orientation. 63.9 percent suffer verbal harassment, 27.1 percent physical harassment, and 12.4 percent physical assault because of their gender expression. In many cases, not surprisingly, this makes students feel unsafe; 63.5 percent reported feeling unsafe based on sexual orientation, and 43.9 percent felt so based on gender expression.

A student who feels unsafe due to bullying and harassment might choose to avoid the situation altogether, adding a loss of learning to the harms they already suffer. According to the 2011 National School Climate Survey,<sup>4</sup> “Nearly one third of LGBT students (29.8%) reported skipping a class at least once and 31.8% missed at least one entire day of school in the past month because of safety concerns.” Even when they remain in class, targeted students lose nearly half a grade point (average 2.9 vs. 3.2). But as we know all too well, this isn't just a question of education. It's a matter of life and death.

Through SSIA and SNDA, and their inclusion in the Strengthening America's Schools Act (S. 1094), Congress has recognized the need to reverse this trend. SSIA supports the creation of comprehensive anti-bullying policies that enumerate specific categories of targeted students – including those targeted based on sexual orientation and gender identity – as well as data collection, public education, and grievance procedures. SNDA protects students from school-based sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination, much like Title IX does for gender

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.dayofsilence.org/>

<sup>2</sup> On December 8, 2010, USA Network published its 2nd annual “United or Divided” poll. 58 percent of respondents gave America a C or D grade for its efforts to stop bullying by kids. 89 percent believed it was a serious problem, and nearly as many (85 percent) supported congressional action to resolve the problem. 70 percent were concerned that it was a growing trend. See USA Network, Hart Research Associates, and Public Opinion Strategies at <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/usa-networks-new-united-or-divided-poll-shows-americans-believe-racial-ethnic-political-divisions-are-worse-than-just-a-year-ago-111547664.html>.

<sup>3</sup> 2011 National School Climate Survey, Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, September 2012.

<sup>4</sup> <http://glsen.org/nscs>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

discrimination, and much like other areas of law do for various protected classes. SNDA recognizes bullying and harassment as discrimination, and it provides both for remedies against discrimination and incentives for schools to prevent it from happening in the first place.

We urge you to contact Representative Linda Sánchez (5-6676) and Senator Robert Casey (4-6324) to cosponsor SSIA and Representative Jared Polis (5-2161) and Senator Al Franken (4-5641) to cosponsor SNDA. Thank you again to the members of Congress who have already registered their support.

Ultimately, this is about stopping abhorrent behavior that gets in the way of quality education. All students deserve far better than that.

Sincerely,



Marge Baker  
Executive Vice President for Policy and Program



Jen Herrick  
Senior Policy Analyst



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS**

4340 East West Highway, Suite 402  
Bethesda, MD 20814

*Enhancing the mental health and  
educational competence of all children.*

Phone: 301-657-0270  
Fax: 301-657-0275 • TTY: 301-657-4155  
Web: [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org)

March 19, 2014

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), I urge you to support legislation that ensures all students have the opportunity to attend school in an environment that is free of bullying and harassment. NASP represents more than 25,000 school psychologists who work with students, families, educators, and administrators to support the academic achievement, positive behavior, and mental wellness of all students, especially those who struggle with barriers to learning.

School environments that are safe and supportive are more conducive to student learning and result in higher academic achievement and social development. Researchers have estimated that at least 25% of all children will be affected by bullying at some point during their school years. Many of these children miss numerous days of school each year due to fear and anxiety associated with being bullied. These adverse effects are not limited to victims; bystanders and witnesses of bullying often feel anxiety, guilt, and lowered self-respect (Garrity et al., 2002). Those students who engage in bullying behavior have higher rates of substance abuse, greater mental health problems, increased aggressive behavior, and are more likely to be involved in criminal activity as adults (e.g Nimela et al., 2011; Fox et al., 2003). Bullying and harassment in schools creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation that not only affects the individual learning and safety of all students in the building. In a study conducted by the U.S. Secret Service (2002), researchers found that unaddressed bullying could cause an escalation in school violence. This report noted that 75% of school shootings were linked to harassment and bullying. School shootings and other serious school safety problems that affect a school's climate for learning can be prevented with effective leadership and public policies that directly address these problems.

The risk of being bullied or harassed is even greater for students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT). Surveys indicate that 85% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed, 40% reported being physically harassed, and 19% reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year as a result of perceived or real sexual orientation. This population is three times as likely as their non- LGBT peers to feel unsafe at school (National School Climate Survey, 2009). In addition, according to the Massachusetts 2006 Youth Risk Survey, LGBT youth are up to four times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers.

Based on the research, there is a solution to this problem. Bullying prevention programs that include prevention, school-wide universal positive behavioral supports, early intervention, and individualized interventions for bullies and victims, parental involvement and increased adult supervision can reduce bullying by up to 50% (Olweus, 1997). If we are to solve the problem of bullying and harassment in America's schools, we need to make a significant investment in prevention and intervention programs.

There are currently two bills introduced in the 113th Congress that would help to address the problem of bullying and harassment in our schools. I urge you to support the Safe Schools Improvement Act and the Student Nondiscrimination Act. Although many states and school districts have some form of policy to address bullying, many do not. In addition, many teachers indicate that they do not feel confident in their

ability to effectively identify and address bullying. The Safe Schools Improvement Act would require anti-bullying policies in all of our nation's schools, professional development related to bullying prevention, and careful monitoring of these behaviors in schools. The Student Nondiscrimination Act seeks to end discrimination based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. This act is modeled after existing legislation that offers federal protections against discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability and age. Together, these bills help promote safe schools while ensuring that all students have the best chance to participate freely and achieve school success.

Thank you for your service to our country and for supporting legislation that promotes safe schools for **ALL** students. If you have any questions about school psychological services, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly M. Vaillancourt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "K".

Kelly Vaillancourt, PhD, NCSP  
Director, Government Relations  
National Association of School Psychologists  
kvaillancourt@naspweb.org

March 20, 2014

Dear Members of Congress:

On behalf of the National Women's Law Center, an organization that for over 40 years has worked to expand the possibilities for women and girls in the areas of education and employment, family economic security, and health, we write to urge you to support and cosponsor the Safe Schools Improvement Act (S. 403/H.R. 1199) and the Student Non-Discrimination Act (S. 1088/H.R. 1652), because all children should be allowed to learn in safe and supportive school environments free from harassment.

There is overwhelming evidence establishing a compelling need for action at the federal level to protect LGBT students from discrimination and harassment in schools. In a 2011 study of more than 8,500 LGBT middle and high school students across the U.S., eight out of ten reported experiencing harassment at school within the past year based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, and 60% said they felt unsafe at school because of who they are.<sup>1</sup> In elementary school, LGBT students are four times more likely than their classmates to say they want to stay home from school because they fear for their safety.<sup>2</sup> And according to the Centers for Disease Control, LGBT students are more than twice as likely as their peers to attempt suicide.<sup>3</sup> It is critical that the federal government and schools act to address this very serious problem facing LGBT youth. Evidence also shows that bullying can result in long-term social, academic, psychological, and physical consequences, including decreased interest in school, increased absences, and decreased concentration levels for students, which can last into adulthood.<sup>4</sup>

The Safe Schools Improvement Act ("SSIA") would ensure that schools and districts develop and use comprehensive and effective student conduct policies that include clear prohibitions against bullying and harassment. SSIA would require schools and districts to focus on effective prevention strategies designed to help school personnel meaningfully address bullying and harassment. It would also require states and districts to maintain and report data regarding incidents of bullying and harassment in order to inform the development of effective federal, state and local policies that address these issues. Sponsored by Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr. and Representative Linda T. Sanchez, to date this session, the Safe Schools Improvement Act has

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<sup>1</sup> GLSEN, The 2011 National School Climate Survey, *available at* <http://glsen.org/sites/default/files/2011%20National%20School%20Climate%20Survey%20Full%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> GLSEN, *Playgrounds and Prejudice: Elementary School Climate in the United States: A Survey of Students and Teachers* (2012), *available at* <http://glsen.org/sites/default/files/Playgrounds%20%26%20Prejudice.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Health: Youth*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> *See, e.g.,* William E. Copeland, Ph.D., et al., *Adult Psychiatric Outcomes of Bullying and Being Bullied by Peers in Childhood and Adolescence*, 70(4) JAMA Psychiatry 419-26 (2013).

garnered the bipartisan support of 43 senators and 182 representatives, and the Center urges you to add your support.

The Student Non-Discrimination Act (“SNDA”) would establish a comprehensive federal prohibition against discrimination and harassment in public elementary and secondary schools across the country based on a student’s actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. SNDA would provide lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (“LGBT”) students with long overdue and much needed explicit federal protections against discrimination and harassment. The legislation also protects students who associate with LGBT people, including students with LGBT parents and friends. Sponsored by Senator Al Franken and Representative Jared Polis, to date this session the Student Non-Discrimination Act has the support of 38 senators and 167 representatives.

The Safe Schools Improvement Act (S. 403/H.R. 1199) and the Student Non-Discrimination Act (S. 1088/H.R. 1652) present Congress with a historic opportunity to implement important protections against bullying and harassment for all students, and to offer critical protections to current and future generations of LGBT youth and their student allies by ensuring that discrimination against and harassment of students on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity will have no place in our country’s public elementary and secondary schools.

Sincerely,



Marcia D. Greenberger  
Co-President



Lara S. Kaufmann  
Senior Counsel & Director of  
Education Policy for At-Risk Students



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For Donations  
P.O. Box 60108  
Los Angeles, CA 90060-0108

March 21, 2014

Dear Member of Congress:

I am writing to express Point Foundation's strong support of the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA, H.R. 1199 & S. 403) and the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA, H.R. 1652 & S. 1088). We thank the sponsors and cosponsors therein for addressing what has become a pervasive national problem,<sup>1</sup> and we urge all members of Congress to join them.

Point Foundation is the nation's largest scholarship-granting organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) students of merit. Every year, thousands of LGBTQ students apply for our scholarships. Many have experienced harassment in school that no student should experience.

According to the 2011 National School Climate Survey:<sup>2</sup> 81.9 percent of LGBT students suffer verbal harassment, 38.3 percent physical harassment, and 18.3 percent physical assault because of their sexual orientation. 63.9 percent suffer verbal harassment, 27.1 percent physical harassment, and 12.4 percent physical assault because of their gender expression. In many cases, not surprisingly, this makes students feel unsafe; 63.5 percent reported feeling unsafe based on sexual orientation, and 43.9 percent felt so based on gender expression.

A student who feels unsafe due to bullying and harassment might choose to avoid the situation altogether, adding a loss of learning to the harms they already suffer.

According to the 2011 National School Climate Survey,<sup>3</sup> "Nearly one third of LGBT students (29.8%) reported skipping a class at least once and 31.8% missed at least one entire day of school in the past month because of safety concerns." Even when they remain in class, targeted students lose nearly half a grade point (average 2.9 vs. 3.2). But as we know all too well, this isn't just a question of education. It's a matter of life and death.

Through SSIA and SNDA, and their inclusion in the Strengthening America's Schools Act (S. 1094), Congress has recognized the need to reverse this trend. SSIA supports the creation of comprehensive anti-bullying policies that enumerate specific categories of targeted students – including those targeted based on sexual orientation and gender identity – as well as data collection, public education, and grievance procedures. SNDA protects students from school-based sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination, much like Title IX does for gender discrimination and much like other areas of law do for various protected classes. SNDA recognizes bullying and harassment

<sup>1</sup> On December 8, 2010, USA Network published its 2nd annual "United or Divided" poll. 58 percent of respondents gave America a C or D grade for its efforts to stop bullying by kids. 89 percent believed it was a serious problem, and nearly as many (85 percent) supported congressional action to resolve the problem. 70 percent were concerned that it was a growing trend. See USA Network, Hart Research Associates, and Public Opinion Strategies at <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/usa-networks-new-united-or-divided-poll-shows-americans-believe-racial-ethnic-political-divisions-are-worse-than-just-a-year-ago-111547664.html>.

<sup>2</sup> 2011 National School Climate Survey, Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, September 2012. <http://glsen.org/nscls>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

as discrimination, and it provides both for remedies against discrimination and incentives for schools to prevent it from happening in the first place.

We urge you to contact Representative Linda Sánchez (5-6676) and Senator Robert Casey (4- 6324) to cosponsor SSIA and Representative Jared Polis (5-2161) and Senator Al Franken (4- 5641) to cosponsor SNDA. Thank you again to the members of Congress who have already registered their support.

Ultimately, this is about stopping abhorrent behavior that gets in the way of quality education. All students deserve far better than that.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Valencia', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jorge Valencia  
Executive Director and CEO  
Point Foundation

***Point Foundation empowers promising LGBTQ students to achieve their full academic and leadership potential – despite the obstacles often put before them – to make a significant impact on society.***





March 24, 2014

United States Congress  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the two million children being raised by parents who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, (LGBT), I urge you to co-sponsor the Safe Schools Improvement Act (S. 403 and H.R. 1199) and the Student Non-Discrimination Act (S. 1088 and H.R. 1652). Family Equality Council is a national organization working to ensure full social and legal equality for LGBTQ parents and their children by providing direct support, educating the American public, and securing inclusion in legislation, policies, and practices impacting families. Central to our mission is ensuring that children with LGBTQ parents are able to attend school without fear of bullying, violence, harassment and discrimination because of who their parents are or how their families were created.

The Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA) would amend the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (Title IV, Part A, Subpart 1 of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001), which supports programs that prevent violence and drug use in and around schools in order to foster a safe learning environment that supports student academic achievement. The bill would require schools and districts receiving federal funds to adopt codes of conduct that specifically ban bullying and harassment of all children, including on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. The bill also prohibits bullying of students who associate with individuals with these characteristics, providing protection for the children of LGBT parents.

The Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA) is modeled after Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. §§ 1681-1688), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and provides legal recourse to redress such discrimination. SNDA prohibits any school program or activity receiving federal financial assistance from discriminating against any public school student on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition, SNDA prevents discrimination against any public school student because of the actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity of a person with whom a student associates or has associated.

America has a rich tradition of valuing education and protecting and nurturing children through the educational process. Children with LGBT parents should not grow up feeling that their country does not value their success or the legitimacy of their parents and their families. We must ensure that all children have the same opportunity to thrive – which requires that they feel safe, supported and valued in school. Students experiencing harassment based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity or because they have LGBT parents are deprived of equal educational opportunities and are too often left with few or no avenues for recourse.

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p 617.502.8700 f 617.502.8701  
visit us at [www.familyequality.org](http://www.familyequality.org)



Bullying and harassment in schools is a nationwide problem, as is evidenced by recent cases over the past several years where students across the country took their own lives after enduring relentless bullying and harassment at school. Studies show that alarming numbers of children with LGBT parents report experiencing bullying and harassment at school because of who their parents are and how their families were formed. Family Equality Council has issued a report which found that 42% of the children surveyed reported experiencing verbal harassment in the previous twelve months at school because of their family composition, including negative remarks specifically about having an LGBT parent. More than 1/3 of these same students reported that they had been verbally harassed because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and nearly 1/3 had experienced verbal harassment because of the way they expressed their gender. Research shows that unchecked bullying and harassment negatively impact student achievement by decreasing interest in school, increasing absenteeism, and decreasing concentration levels for students. Leaders in the fields of education and child welfare agree that positive school climate and culture is a critical condition for promoting students' academic success.

Currently, federal law expressly addresses discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, disability and national origin, but does not explicitly include sexual orientation or gender identity protections. Nor does federal law comprehensively and expressly address issues of school bullying, harassment and discrimination, leaving LGBT students and children who have LGBT parents with limited legal recourse against such activity. Amending the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to include the principles outlined in SSIA presents an opportunity for the federal government to fill critical gaps in education policy and promote and support equal opportunity for all students. We must address this fundamental problem and create safer, healthier school climates for our children.

All students, regardless of their personal characteristics, who their parents are, or how their families were created deserve to attend schools conducive to learning and achievement. It is Family Equality Council's belief that Congress and the Administration must include the principles of SSIA in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to ensure all students are respected and have the opportunity to succeed. Establishing and maintaining a federal commitment to integrating the provisions of the Safe Schools Improvement Act into the Elementary and Secondary Education Act can help achieve that goal.

I very much appreciate your leadership and look forward to answering any questions you or your staff may have about this important issue. Please contact Michael Porcello ([mporcello@familyequality.org](mailto:mporcello@familyequality.org), 202-496-1285) in our Washington, D.C. office with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gabriel Blau", written over a light yellow rectangular background.

Gabriel Blau  
Executive Director  
Family Equality Council

Founders  
James Leceane  
Peggy Rajski  
Randy Stone (1958-2007)

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Abbe Land  
Executive Director & CEO

1875 Eye Street NW, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20006  
202-204-4730  
www.thetrevorproject.org

March 25, 2014

Dear Member of Congress:

In honor of next month's Day of Silence highlighting anti-LGBTQ bullying and harassment in schools,<sup>1</sup> and on behalf of the more than one hundred thousand lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth served annually by The Trevor Project's life-saving programming, we write in strong support of the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA, H.R. 1199 & S. 403). We thank the 226 bipartisan House and Senate cosponsors of this critical bill for addressing what has become a pervasive national problem,<sup>2</sup> and we urge all members of Congress to join them.

The Trevor Project is the leading nonprofit, national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ young people through age 24. The Trevor Project saves young lives through its accredited free and confidential lifeline, secure instant messaging services which provide live help and intervention, a social networking community for LGBTQ youth, in-school workshops, educational materials, online resources, and advocacy. The Trevor Project is a leader and innovator in suicide prevention.

Studies show that approximately 20% to 30% of U.S. students in grades 6 through 12 are bullied at school.<sup>3</sup> Nearly one in four public schools report that bullying occurs among students on a daily or weekly basis.<sup>4</sup> LGBTQ youth are especially vulnerable. According to the 2011 National School Climate Survey,<sup>5</sup> 81.9% of LGBTQ students reported being verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation, and 63.9% of LGBTQ students reported being verbally harassed because of their gender expression. A third of LGBTQ students have skipped a class or an entire day of school at least once in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable. LGBT youth that are subject to high rates of bullying and harassment face increased rates of depression, lower self-esteem, and lower school connectedness.

Bullying and harassment may significantly and negatively impact young people's mental health—which can increase the risk for suicide. Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among young people ages 10 to 24. LGB youth are 4 times more likely, and questioning youth are 3 times more likely, to attempt suicide as their straight peers.<sup>6</sup> Nearly half of young transgender people have seriously thought about taking their lives, and one quarter report having made a suicide attempt.<sup>7</sup>

The Safe Schools Improvement Act will ensure that school districts throughout the country create anti-bullying policies tailored to meet the needs of their communities, and it provides educators with the prevention and educational tools they need to protect youth from bullying and harassment. These simple steps can help to make a real difference in the lives of young people nationwide.

Please cosponsor the Safe Schools Improvement Act (S. 403/H.R. 1199) today. Together we can make schools safer for all young people through education and awareness.

We urge you to contact Representative Linda Sánchez (5-6676) and Senator Robert Casey (4-6324) to cosponsor SSIA. Thank you again to the members of Congress who have already registered their support.

Ultimately, this is about ensuring schools are safe so that all students receive the quality education they deserve.

Sincerely,



Abbe Land  
Executive Director & CEO  
The Trevor Project

---

<sup>1</sup> DAY OF SILENCE, <http://www.dayofsilence.org/> (last visited Mar. 19, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> On December 8, 2010, USA Network published its 2nd annual “United or Divided” poll. 58% of respondents gave America a C or D grade for its efforts to stop bullying by kids. 89% believed it was a serious problem, and nearly as many (85%) supported congressional action to resolve the problem. 70% were concerned that it was a growing trend. See *USA Network's New 'United or Divided' Poll Shows Americans Believe Racial, Ethnic, Political Divisions are Worse Than Just a Year Ago*, PR NEWSWIRE, Dec. 8, 2010, <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/usa-networks-new-united-or-divided-poll-shows-americans-believe-racial-ethnic-political-divisions-are-worse-than-just-a-year-ago-111547664.html> (last visited Mar. 19, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Ctrs. for Disease Control and Prevention, *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States 2011*, MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY WEEKLY REPORT, June 8, 2012, at 161; Nat’l Ctr. for Educ. Statistics., *Student Victimization in U.S. Schools*, Nov. 2011, at 11.

<sup>4</sup> *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2012 - Indicator 7: Discipline Problems Reported by Schools*, NAT’L CTR. FOR EDUC. STATISTICS., [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/crimeindicators/crimeindicators2012/ind\\_07.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/crimeindicators/crimeindicators2012/ind_07.asp) (last visited Mar. 19, 2014)

<sup>5</sup> See generally Joseph G. Kosciw, et al., *2011 National School Climate Survey*, GAY, LESBIAN & STRAIGHT EDUCATION NETWORK, Sept. 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Kann, L, et al. 2011. “Sexual identity, sex of sexual contacts, and health-risk behaviors among students in grades 9-12 – Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance, selected sites, United States, 2001-2009.” *MMWR* 60(SS07): 1-133. Available from <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6007a1.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Arnold H. Grossman & Anthony R. D’Augelli, *Transgender Youth and Life-Threatening Behaviors*, 37(5) *SUICIDE LIFE THREAT BEHAV.* 527 (2007).



March 26, 2014

Re: Safe Schools Improvement Act (H.R. 1199)

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF), I urge you to support and co-sponsor the Safe Schools Improvement Act ("SSIA", H.R. 1199).

No student, irrespective of their race, religion, gender, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation, should be denied access to an education and the opportunity for success because their schools are unable to be a safe space for all. By requiring districts to establish procedures to address bullying and collect data on incidents, schools will be accountable to teachers, parents, and students. The increased data collection will clarify the problem, and the requirement to establish procedures will help school districts adopt more effective strategies that will allow students an equal opportunity to succeed.

We urge you to support SSIA in response to increasing reports of harassment and violence faced by Sikh American students in schools. Consider the experience of Akashdeep Singh Ahluwalia, an eleven year-old Sikh American from New Jersey. Like many Sikh American students, who keep their articles of faith, he was bullied. Akashdeep was bullied so often that he had to change schools. When asked how he feels about the harassment he continues to face he responded, "It really depresses me. But in the end what can I do?"<sup>1</sup>

No student should ask "what can I do?" when they are bullied. No student should feel alone because they are bullied. Your support of SSIA will help schools create an environment in which Sikh American and other students are given an opportunity to build a community with their classmates and succeed.

SALDEF urges you to support the Safe Schools Improvement Act. Should you have any questions about the Act and its impact on the Sikh American community, please contact Navdeep Singh, Policy Director, at [navdeep@saldef.org](mailto:navdeep@saldef.org) or 202-393-2700x128.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jasjit Singh". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Jasjit Singh  
Executive Director

---

<sup>1</sup> BBC World Service, "Heart and Soul: A Place to Dwell". December 28, 2013. *Available at* [http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p01ndgxq/Heart\\_and\\_Soul\\_A\\_Place\\_to\\_Dwell/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p01ndgxq/Heart_and_Soul_A_Place_to_Dwell/)



March 26, 2014

Re: Safe Schools Improvement Act (S. 403)

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF), I urge you to support and co-sponsor the Safe Schools Improvement Act ("SSIA", S. 403).

No student, irrespective of their race, religion, gender, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation, should be denied access to an education and the opportunity for success because their schools are unable to be a safe space for all. By requiring districts to establish procedures to address bullying and collect data on incidents, schools will be accountable to teachers, parents, and students. The increased data collection will clarify the problem, and the requirement to establish procedures will help school districts adopt more effective strategies that will allow students an equal opportunity to succeed.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jasjit Singh".

Jasjit Singh  
Executive Director

---

<sup>1</sup> BBC World Service, "Heart and Soul: A Place to Dwell". December 28, 2013. *Available at* [http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p01ndgxq/Heart\\_and\\_Soul\\_A\\_Place\\_to\\_Dwell/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p01ndgxq/Heart_and_Soul_A_Place_to_Dwell/)



## Cosponsor the Safe Schools Improvement Act

March 27, 2014

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the 170,000 members and supporters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I urge you to cosponsor the Safe Schools Improvement Act (S. 403), a bipartisan bill which ensures that states and school districts develop comprehensive, enumerated anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies that cover all students, including students who do not conform to gender stereotype.

AAUW's research on bullying and sexual harassment, *Crossing the Line: Sexual Harassment at School* found, based on a nationally representative survey, found that 48 percent of students surveyed had experienced some form of sexual harassment in the 2010-11 school year. Of those, 87 percent said the harassment had a negative emotional and/or physical effect on them. Students experienced verbal, physical, and cyber (Facebook, text, email, or another electronic form) harassment. Despite the prevalence of harassment, only 9 percent of students who experienced harassment reported the incident to a teacher, guidance counselor, or other adult at their school. Only one quarter of harassed students talked about their experience with a family member. AAUW encourages you to read the report, which can be accessed at [www.aauw.org/learn/research/crossingtheline.cfm](http://www.aauw.org/learn/research/crossingtheline.cfm).

AAUW's report underscores the urgency of Sen. Robert Casey's Safe Schools Improvement Act (S. 403). In addition to requiring policies prohibiting bullying and harassment, effective complaint procedures, and information sharing in current reporting systems, SSIA also provides opportunities for professional development to prevent bullying and harassment and student education programs. This is a critically important bill that will make a real difference in the lives of ALL students nationwide. That is why this bill is supported by over 110 leading national organizations in the fields of education, health, youth development, civil rights and religion.

AAUW strongly encourages you to cosponsor the Safe Schools Improvement Act (S. 403) by contacting Christina Baumgardner ([christina\\_baumgardner@casey.senate.gov](mailto:christina_baumgardner@casey.senate.gov)) with Senator Casey (D-PA). Cosponsorship and votes associated with this issue may be scored in the AAUW Action Fund *Congressional Voting Record* for the 113th Congress. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202/785-7720, or Erin Prangle, associate director of government relations, at 202/785-7730, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Maatz  
Vice President of Government Relations



## PFLAG National Seeks Support for and Action on Key Youth Bills

March 28, 2014

Dear Member of Congress:

I write on behalf of PFLAG members in your District, from whom you will hear directly between today and April 11 to express both thanks if you have already demonstrated your support for, and a request if you have not supported all students, including LGBT and gender non-conforming youth, to be safe in their schools, including the journey from their home, if they have one, and back.

Specifically, today's letter to you involves three bills: **The Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA)**, **The Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA)** and **Every Child Deserves a Family (ECDF)**.

PFLAG is the nation's largest family and ally organization. It is comprised of parents, families, friends and straight allies united with people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT), and has more than 350 chapters and 200,000 members and supporters crossing multiple generations of American families in major urban centers, small cities and town and rural areas in all 50 states.

PFLAG's values are America's values. We believe that the welfare, safety and well-being of our children, all of our children, is an American value with a high priority that merits your attention.

As noted, you will receive a call for urgent action directly from your constituents who are PFLAG members and supporters. For now, I hope you can bear these in mind as you hear from people back home:

**Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA) and Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA).** As Congress moves toward agreeing upon the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in the 113th Congress, these two bills--either by inclusion with exact language or by expressed intent with similar language--are desired to be included. Please move both of these bills forward for the sake of safety without bullying or harassment of our student youth as they wish merely to learn as peer students do now.

**Every Child Deserves a Family (ECDF).** This child welfare non-discrimination bill warrants broader attention in both chambers of Congress. We think it is very important to make legally possible the linking of children with parents for adoption and guardians for fostering, including LGBT children and potential LGBT parents. There are so many children ready to be adopted or fostered, including LGBT youth. Please help them.

Sincerely,

Diego Sanchez, APR, Director of Policy

PFLAG National - [dsanchez@pflag.org](mailto:dsanchez@pflag.org) or direct: 202.657.6997, cell: 617.835.1455 [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)



31 March 2014

Dear Members of Congress:

On behalf of CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers and all of the nearly 2 million people across the country that we represent, we urge you to support the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA, H.R. 1199 & S. 403) and the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA, H.R. 1652 & S. 1088). We thank the sponsors and cosponsors of these two bills for recognizing the importance of providing all students a safe and productive learning environment, and we implore all members of congress to join them.

CenterLink represents 149 centers in 45 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia, supporting the heart and soul of the LGBT movement. LGBT community centers work more closely with their LGBT constituency and engage more community leaders and decision-makers than any other LGBT network in the country. It is these community centers that often serve as the first line of defense against harassment and bullying of LGBT youth, and it these centers that see the devastating impact of these acts on our country's students.

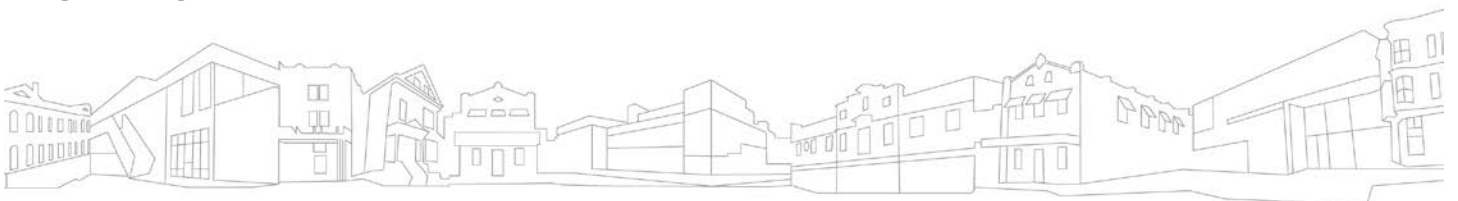
According to the 2011 National School Climate Survey<sup>1</sup>, over 80% of LGBT students reported being harassed in school because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, with almost 1 out of every 5 LGBT students reporting that they had been physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation and over 1 out of 10 students reporting that they had been physically assaulted because of their gender identity. Altogether, 63.5% of LGBT students surveyed expressed that they felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, and 43.9% felt unsafe because of their gender identity. Students who feel unsafe may choose to avoid school entirely, creating the potential for illiteracy, joblessness, and homelessness among LGBT youth. Bullying is more than an issue of name calling and spitballs. For many students, it is a matter of life and death.

The SSIA is a proposed amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that focuses on using local educational agencies to create policies that ensure harassment doesn't impede education. The SSIA would add sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of enumerated categories of students which bullying and harassment are likely to target. The bill would also require schools to collect data on incidences and responses, and to inform the public of their findings on an annual basis, ensuring accountability for their actions.

The SNDA protects students from school-based discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, comparable to what Title IX is designed to address for sex and gender. It both forbids schools from discriminating based on sexual orientation and prohibits schools from ignoring harassing behavior. It also provides students with the means to report violations of these prohibitions in court.

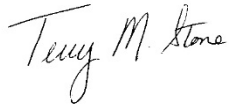
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<sup>1</sup> 2011 National School Climate Survey. Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network. 2012. <http://glsen.org/nscc>



It is our responsibility to ensure that all students have access to quality education without fear of harassment and discrimination. We strongly encourage you to support and co-sponsor the SSIA and the SNDA.

Sincerely,



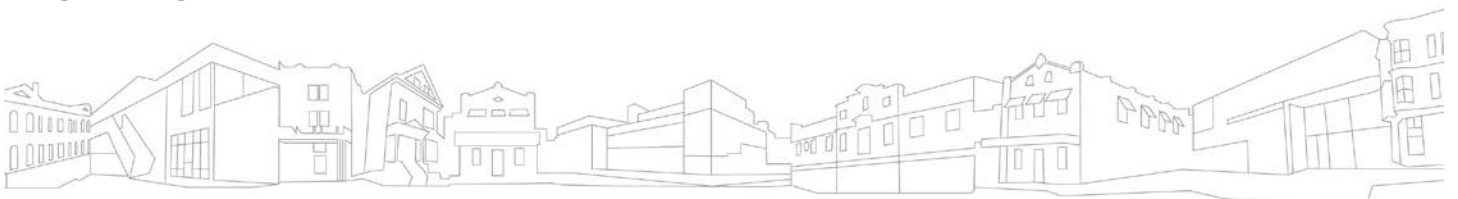
Terry Stone

CEO

CenterLink is a 501(c) 3 organization.

In compliance with Section 170(f) (8) of the Internal Revenue Service Code, please be advised that the donor did not receive any goods or services in whole or in partial consideration for the stated contributions.

P O Box 24490  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33307-4490  
954.765.6024; Fax 954.765.6593  
[www.lgbtcenters.org](http://www.lgbtcenters.org)





BOSTON | DENVER | SAN FRANCISCO

working for the full equality and inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Jews in Jewish life

April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Keshet, a national organization working for the full equality and inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Jews in Jewish life, I urge you to support the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA), H.R. 1199, and the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA), H.R. 1652.

Bullying and harassment of LGBT students, as well as students perceived to be LGBT, is widespread. According to research done by GLSEN, Inc., the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, over 80% of LGBT students have felt harassed due to their sexual orientation. Such bullying and harassment can—and *has*—led to dangerous situations for youth.

Keshet is pleased to have spearheaded the Jewish community to stand against bullying of all forms. Since 2010, we have asked Jewish organizations and individuals to take a community pledge. Signatories have put their name to the following statement:

As members of a tradition that sees each person as created in the divine image, we respond with anguish and outrage at the spate of suicides brought on by homophobic bullying and intolerance.

We hereby commit to ending homophobic bullying or harassment of any kind in our synagogues, schools, organizations, and communities.

I pledge to speak out when I witness anyone being demeaned for their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

I commit myself to do whatever I can to ensure that each and every person in my community is treated with dignity and respect.

Since the campaign launched, more than 11,000 individuals and 1,000 Jewish organizations have signed on, making a public commitment to stand up against demeaning or bullying treatment of anyone due to real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. We ask for members of our government to make their own commitment to protecting students from bullying within schools by taking action in Congress.

There is a Jewish concept known as **תּוֹקֵית מִלּוֹע**, or *Tikkun Olam*, which translates to an obligation to repair and heal the world. While term might be rooted in Jewish text and tradition, the concept is universal. Please stand with the Jewish community and Keshet and help repair the world by protecting our students.



BOSTON | DENVER | SAN FRANCISCO

working for the full equality and inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Jews in Jewish life

For more information, please contact Keshet at [617.524.9227](tel:617.524.9227).

Idit Klein, Keshet Executive Director



BOSTON | DENVER | SAN FRANCISCO

working for the full equality and inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Jews in Jewish life

April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the Keshet, a national organization working for the full equality and inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Jews in Jewish life, I urge you to take action and co-sponsor the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA), S.1088, and the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA), S.403.

Bullying and harassment of LGBT students, as well as students perceived to be LGBT, is widespread. According to research done by GLSEN, Inc., the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, over 80% of LGBT students have felt harassed due to their sexual orientation. Such bullying and harassment can—and *has*—led to dangerous situations for youth.

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BOSTON | DENVER | SAN FRANCISCO

working for the full equality and inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Jews in Jewish life

For more information, please contact Keshet at [617.524.9227](tel:617.524.9227).

Idit Klein, Keshet Executive Director

April 1, 2014

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, which works to fulfill my father's vision for a just and peaceful world, and our bullying prevention initiative, RFK Project SEATBELT, I strongly urge you to support the Safe Schools Improvement Act (H.R. 1199 & S.403).

Bullying is, at its core, a human rights violation. It is the abuse of the powerless at the hands of the powerful, and it is a threat against the right to receive an education free from persecution. According to the U.S. Department of Education, over 28% of youth age 12-18 report being bullied in the past year. The effects of bullying are serious and long-lasting and affect both academic achievement as well as mental and physical health long after the bullying has stopped.

SSIA provides a consistent definition of bullying, solidifies the requirement for schools to address bullying, and holds them accountable to collect data on the incidence and response. Although bullying prevention laws now exist in forty-nine states, D.C., and Puerto Rico, these laws vary dramatically. A 2011 report by the U.S. Department of Education showed that only a handful of states follow best practices shown to be effective in reducing bullying such as enumerating groups frequently targeted for bullying, including relationally or socially aggressive acts like social ostracism, and providing for mental health support for not only those targeted by bullying, but also those who perpetrate. SSIA ensures that all states follow these best practices.

In 1973, child abuse legislation was at the same point we are today with bullying prevention legislation. Nearly all states had some form of child abuse law, yet each defined child abuse differently and provided different reporting and assistance procedures and regulations. Each state recognized the need for such legislation, just like nearly all states have with bullying today, yet these differences made it hard for the federal government to provide assistance to serve the needs of each state. With varying definitions, collecting accurate data to understand the issue was also impossible. With a clear need for a federal definition and federal guidance on the minimum requirements surrounding child abuse, the first Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) was enacted in 1974.

CAPTA has made it possible for more consistent and accurate accounting of child abuse and more sustained, collaborative and evidence-based efforts towards its prevention. It is time we do the same for bullying. SSIA capitalizes on the existing momentum in states and ensure we are working efficiently towards the same goal. I urge you to support passage of the Safe Schools Improvement Act and ensure youths' rights to an education are not violated by bullying. Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,



Kerry Kennedy, President  
Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights



empowering youth to fight homophobia and transphobia in schools

April 2, 2014

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the Gay-Straight Alliance Network, we write today to urge you to support two critically important bills: The Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA) (H.R. 1199 / S. 403) and Student Non-Discrimination Act (H.R. 1652 / S. 555). GSA Network is a national organization that operates a national association of 39 statewide organizations serving Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs in more than 3,000 schools across the country. Tens of thousands of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and straight ally youth participate in GSA clubs each year, and work to make schools safer.

Together these bills represent the first Federal definition of bullying and harassment, a necessary step to helping school districts, administrators and educators prevent, identify and address incidents of bullying and harassment. In the United States, 63.5% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students feel unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation and 43.9% because of how they express their gender. 81.9% of LGBT students were verbally harassed at school because of their sexual orientation and 63.9% because of their gender expression. 55.2% of LGBT students were harassed or threatened by their peers via electronic mediums, often referred to as cyber bullying.

In addition to defining bullying and harassment, the SSIA and SNDA recognize that bullying and harassment on the bases of actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity as discriminatory; provide remedies and incentives for schools to prevent and remedy bullying and harassment including implementation of restorative practices, and add to existing classes protected from discrimination individuals who are targets of bullying and harassment based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.

The high incidence of harassment and bullying is exacerbated by school personnel who rarely, if ever, intervene. In the United States, 60.4% of LGBT students who were harassed or assaulted in school did not report the incident to school staff, most often due to believing that little to no action would be taken or the situation would worsen if reported. Of those who reported incidents, 36.7% said school staff did nothing in response.

[www.gsanetwork.org](http://www.gsanetwork.org)

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1550 Bryant St., Ste. 600  
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**central valley:**  
tel: 559.268.2780

**southern california:**  
tel: 213.529.4822





empowering youth to fight homophobia and transphobia in schools

GSA Network strongly supports the use of evidence-based restorative practices that facilitate students' social-emotional learning and create more positive and safe environments for all students. Restorative practices create opportunities for growth and learning for both the targets *and* perpetrators of bullying and harassment who themselves are often acting out through bullying behavior to protect against their own potential harassment by others. When school discipline focuses on punitive approaches, those social-emotional learning opportunities are lost.

Recently, the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights and the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division together issued guidance to school districts to address and remedy the disproportionate administration and severity of punitive school discipline practices on the basis of race. While this guidance does not describe the impact of punitive school discipline practices impact LGBTQ students of color specifically, we know that LGBTQ students in general, and LGBTQ students of color *in particular*, face disproportionate administration and severity of punitive discipline practices. In 2010, the Journal of Pediatrics released findings that LGB youth are 1.4 times more likely to be suspended than their straight peers and up to three times more likely to experience criminal justice and school sanctions than their straight peers. In 2012, the Center for American Progress reported that LGBTQ youth are significantly over-represented in the juvenile justice system (often the result of removal from school): approximately 300,000 gay and transgender youth are arrested and/or detained each year, of which more than 60 percent are black or Latino.

GSA Network appreciates your leadership in addressing this important issue, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that it becomes law. If you have any questions, please email me at [Carolyn@gsanetwork.org](mailto:Carolyn@gsanetwork.org) or 415-552-4229.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carolyn Laub".

Carolyn Laub  
Executive Director

[www.gsanetwork.org](http://www.gsanetwork.org)

**national headquarters:**  
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**central valley:**  
tel: 559.268.2780

**southern california:**  
tel: 213.529.4822

April 2, 2014

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the nation's middle level and high school principals, assistant principals, and other school leaders, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) urges you to cosponsor the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA) (H.R. 1652/S.1088) and the Safe Schools Improvement Act (H.R. 1199/S.403) and to support their inclusion in a comprehensive bill to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

NASSP believes that learning occurs best in a supportive, inviting, orderly, and personalized school setting, where students are safe and feel free from theft, threats, intimidation, bullying, weapons, drugs, or violence of any type. Principals accept that their first responsibility is to foster such a climate, and the public continues to confirm that priority. NASSP believes that school leaders and staff members, along with community members and leaders, have a shared responsibility to ensure that schools are safe and orderly. Trusting relationships in school are the most effective means of ensuring school safety.

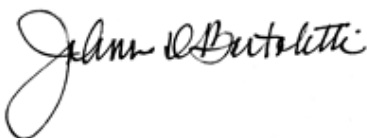
As you know, students who are (or are perceived to be) LGBT are subjected to pervasive discrimination, including harassment and bullying. The harassment youth experience in school deprives them of equal educational opportunities by increasing their likelihood of skipping school, underperforming academically, and dropping out. Left unchecked, this harassment can contribute to even more devastating consequences, including suicide. Furthermore, while discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, disability, national origin and religion are expressly addressed in federal civil rights laws or the Constitution, they do not explicitly cover sexual orientation or gender identity. As a result, parents of LGBT students have limited legal recourse when schools fail to protect their children from discrimination.

The SNDA prohibits public schools from discriminating against any student on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. It allows an aggrieved individual to assert a violation of these prohibitions in a judicial proceeding. In addition, it allows federal authorities to address discrimination made unlawful by the bill. The SNDA is modeled after Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. §§ 1681-1688), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and provides legal recourse to redress such discrimination.

The SSIA would amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to require school districts in states that receive ESEA funds to adopt codes of conduct specifically prohibiting bullying and harassment, including on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and religion. The bill would also require schools to collect data on incidences and responses, and require the Department of Education to report these findings to Congress every two years, ensuring that schools are held accountable for their actions.

These two bills will help to ensure all students experience safe and intellectually stimulating environments fostered by school districts, schools, school leaders and educators. We urge you to support and cosponsor both the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA) (H.R. 1652/S.1088) and Safe Schools Improvement Act (H.R. 1199/S.403) so that each student learns in a supportive, inviting, orderly, and personalized school environment.

Sincerely,



JoAnn Bartoletti  
Executive Director  
NASSP



April 3, 2014

Dear Member of Congress:

We continue to be amazed at missed opportunities to give critical attention to and address what has become a pervasive national problem. On behalf of the hundreds of progressive faith leaders across the country who are members of African American Ministers in Action (AAMIA), we write urging you to be part of the solution by supporting and cosponsoring the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA) (H.R. 1199 & S. 403) and the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA) (H.R. 1652 and S. 1088), and we thank you if you are already on board.

AAMIA is a body of clerics who also are concerned parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts, sisters and brothers, caregivers of school age children and youth. Since 2010, with the increase in media attention paid to bullying-related suicides, we have joined with other faith, civil, and human rights groups to stand on behalf and for protection of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students as well as those 20.1% who, according to the CDC 2011 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, “are perceived as different from their peers” and therefore “at risk of being bullied”. Why? Because it’s the right thing to do!

In 2011 over 20% of high school youth were bullied and the National School Climate Center Survey reported “over 50% of students do not feel safe in school.” As you know bullying can be verbal, social and physical. According to a survey conducted by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN): 81.9% of LGBT students suffered verbal harassment; 38.3% were subject to physical harassment; and 18.8% experienced physical assault based on sexual orientation. While some have noted gender identity as “a new territory” for school boards, as well as for some faith leaders, 13 states and Washington, DC have laws prohibiting discrimination in schools based on gender identity and expression.

Your support of SSIA and SNDA would provide an important confirmation that we are on the right track to end student misconduct. A 2010 “Dear Colleague” letter from the Assistant Secretary of the Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Education noted that this type of behavior results in “*a climate of fear and disrespect that can seriously impair the physical and psychological health of its victims and create conditions that negatively affect learning, thereby undermining the ability of students to achieve their full potential.*”

A student who does not feel safe due to bullying and harassment may choose avoidance and social isolation that will only add to their loss of learning and increase the harm they are already enduring. This is problematic. According to the GLSEN survey, 29.8% of LGBT students skipped class at least once and 31.8% missed at least one entire day of school in the past month alone because of safety concerns. Even when they remain in class, targeted students lose as much as half a grade point. This has to change, and we can be part of that change.

Your partnership is needed to continue the necessary work to reverse this trend of disrespect, harassment, and victimization. SSIA and SNDA really are matters of life, the quality of life, and death. SSIA supports the creation of comprehensive anti-bullying policies that enumerate specific categories of targeted students – including those targeted based on sexual orientation and gender identity – as well as data collection, public education, and grievance procedures. SNDA protects all students but especially those who are subject to school-based sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination, much like Title IX does for gender discrimination and much like other areas of law do for various protected classes. Furthermore, it recognizes bullying and harassment as discrimination, and it provides both for remedies against discrimination and incentives for schools to prevent it from happening in the first place.

As clergy we will continue to learn and grow in our work for civil and human rights for all because of critical needs that have risen with the increase of cyberbullying and being bullied on school property. When young people come to our places of worship, they walk into a sanctuary, a safe place. This is what we should cooperatively be striving for in our schools.

We encourage you to be a partner in stopping abhorrent behavior that prevents victimized students from accessing quality education. All children deserve far better than that. Can we count on your support and cosponsorship? Your consideration of SSIA and SNDA, including as part of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), is necessary and appreciated.

Please contact Representative Linda Sánchez (5-6676) and Senator Robert Casey (4-6324) to cosponsor SSIA and Representative Jared Polis (5-2161) and Senator Al Franken (4-5641) to cosponsor SNDA.

We thank you if you have already joined our cause.

Sincerely,



Reverend Timothy McDonald, III  
Chairman



Reverend Dr. Robert P. Shine  
Vice-Chair



Minister Leslie Watson Malachi  
Director



1090 Vermont Avenue, NW | Suite 850  
Washington, DC 20005

April 3, 2014

Dear Representative:

For too long a national inattention to bullying has left America's LGBT youth particularly exposed to extremely high rates of harassment and assault. According to the 2011 National School Climate Survey, over 81.9% of LGBT students experienced verbal harassment, over four in ten were physically harassed, and over one in five suffered physical assault based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Many in Congress recognize the reality that faces our nation's youth and the positive impact of anti-bullying laws, which is why they have taken steps to prevent bullying in our nation's schools. By becoming the next co-sponsor of the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA), you, too, can help American children.

SSIA is a zero-cost bill that would impart anti-bullying eligibility requirements for states that receive federal education grants—helping to reduce bullying and save lives. Safe school laws are effective. Multiple studies show that students who live in states with LGBT-inclusive safe school laws experience less harassment and bullying and fewer suicide attempts than students who live in states without these protections. Currently, there is no federal anti-bullying law, and though some states have enacted their own, these laws vary greatly by state and often exclude protections from bullying based on sexual orientation or gender identity—leaving too many children unprotected.

We can all agree that the physical safety and emotional well-being of our nation's schoolchildren should not be dependent on the state in which they live, which is why we urge Congress to stand up for America's schoolchildren and pass the Safe Schools Improvement Act.

H.R. 1199 and S. 403 each has strong bipartisan support, including co-sponsorship from Senators Mark Kirk and Lisa Murkowski, as well as Representatives Richard Hanna, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Don Young, Christopher Gibson, Michael Grimm, Jon Runyan, Charles Dent, Frank LoBiondo and Peter King. These legislators realize that SSIA is a necessary and non-controversial piece of legislation that will go a long way toward protecting students and reducing bullying in our schools, ultimately resulting in an educational environment in which all students can thrive.

Log Cabin Republicans kindly ask you to stand up for America's schoolchildren and take a stand against bullying by co-sponsoring the Safe Schools Improvement Act.

Thank you in advance for your support of this common-sense legislation, and if you have any further questions about the Safe Schools Improvement Act, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Gregory T. Angelo  
Executive Director  
Log Cabin Republicans



1090 Vermont Avenue, NW | Suite 850  
Washington, DC 20005

April 3, 2014

Dear Senator:

For too long a national inattention to bullying has left America's LGBT youth particularly exposed to extremely high rates of harassment and assault. According to the 2011 National School Climate Survey, over 81.9% of LGBT students experienced verbal harassment, over four in ten were physically harassed, and over one in five suffered physical assault based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

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Thank you in advance for your support of this common-sense legislation, and if you have any further questions about the Safe Schools Improvement Act, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Gregory T. Angelo  
Executive Director  
Log Cabin Republicans

April 4, 2014

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of Transgender Law Center, the nation's largest transgender civil rights organization, I urge you to co-sponsor the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA), H.R. 1652 and S. 1088, and to support its inclusion in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) or perceived to be LGBT are subject to well-documented, pervasive discrimination, including harassment, bullying, intimidation and violence. These students are deprived of a fair chance at receiving educational opportunities in our schools.

The National Transgender Discrimination Survey, *Injustice at Every Turn*, found that 78% of transgender people reported being harassed in school. A staggering 31% of transgender people reported being harassed by teachers, and reported a multitude of devastating effects of having an unsupportive school environment.

Federal statutory protections address discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex and disability. Unfortunately, federal civil rights laws do not expressly protect students from discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Decades of civil rights history show that civil rights laws are effective in decreasing discrimination against specific vulnerable groups.

It is time that we extend these laws to protect our LGBT youth.

The SNDA prohibits public schools from discriminating against any student on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. It allows an aggrieved individual to assert a violation of these prohibitions in a judicial proceeding. In addition, it allows federal authorities to address discrimination made unlawful by the bill. The SNDA is modeled after Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. §§ 1681-1688), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and provides legal recourse to redress such discrimination.

No administrator, teacher or school staff would be able to be silent when a student is being bullied or harassed because of his or her actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. The SNDA makes school districts responsible for preparing staff to deal with bullying and harassment of LGBT youth or those perceived to be LGBT.

We urge you to support and co-sponsor the SNDA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Masen Davis". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Masen Davis  
Executive Director



**National Black Justice Coalition**

Post Office Box 71395

Washington, DC 20024

Office: 202.319.1552

[www.NBJC.org](http://www.NBJC.org)

April 7, 2014

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC), the nation's leading civil rights organization dedicated to empowering Black lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, I write in strong support of the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA, H.R. 1199 & S. 403) and the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA, H.R. 1652 & S. 1088). This month will mark the Seventh Annual National Day of Silence, which is a day of action in which students across the country vow to take a form of silence to call attention to the impact of anti-LGBT bullying and harassment in schools. In honor of this important and solemn day, we urge all Members of Congress to support both SSIA and SNDA, and ask for their swift passage.

NBJC believes that every student deserves a learning environment that is safe and free from harassment. No student should be subjected to bullying or harassment that interferes with their ability to learn or jeopardizes their personal safety. According to the most recent National School Climate Survey released in 2011, 81.9 percent of LGBT students suffer verbal harassment, 38.3 percent physical harassment and 18.3 percent physical assault because of their sexual orientation. 63.9 percent suffer verbal harassment, 27.1 percent physical harassment and 12.4 percent physical assault because of their gender expression. This makes students feel defenseless as 63.5 percent reported feeling unsafe based on sexual orientation and 43.9 percent felt so based on gender expression. A student who feels powerless due to bullying and harassment might choose to avoid the situation altogether, adding a loss of learning to the harms they already suffer.

When LGBT students are pushed out of the classroom due to a hostile or unwelcoming school climate, this can lead to negative consequences that go beyond the classroom. As the recent Center for American Progress report entitled *Beyond Bullying* states, LGBT students, specifically LGBT students of color, all too often end up in a cycle of unfair criminalization that has lifelong consequences. According to this report, LGBT youth are up to three times more likely to experience harsh disciplinary treatment by school administrators than their non-LGBT counterparts. LGBT youth also report significant distrust of school administrators and do not believe that school officials do enough to foster safe and welcoming school climates. Most importantly, LGBT youth are disproportionately overrepresented in the juvenile justice system. These disheartening facts serve as further proof for the urgent need of SSIA and SNDA.

Through SSIA and SNDA, and their inclusion in the Strengthening America's Schools Act (S. 1094), Congress has taken the initial steps to reverse the vicious uptick of bullying and hostile school climates towards LGBT students. If enacted, SSIA would support the creation of comprehensive anti-bullying policies that enumerate specific categories of targeted students –



including those targeted based on sexual orientation and gender identity – as well as data collection, public education and grievance procedures. If passed by Congress, SNDA would protect students from school-based sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination similar to the application of Title IX for gender discrimination. SNDA would also recognize bullying and harassment as discrimination, and provide incentives for schools to prevent it from happening in the first place.

We cannot afford to turn a blind eye to the unspeakable tragedies unchecked bullying is causing across our nation. Students must be protected, and must feel safe and affirmed in their schools. NBJC is dedicated to the elimination of anti-LGBT bullying and harassment in all our communities, and we recognize how these behaviors specifically attack those that live at the intersection of being Black and LGBT. Ultimately, this is about stopping abhorrent behavior that gets in the way of a quality education. All students deserve far better than that.

Sincerely,



Sharon J. Lettman-Hicks  
Executive Director and CEO



Rabbi David Saperstein  
Director and Counsel

Jennifer Brodkey Kaufman, Chair  
Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism

Arthur and Sara Jo Kobacker Building  
2027 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
at Kivie Kaplan Way  
Washington, DC 20036

202.387.2800 Fax: 202.667.9070 E-mail: [rac@urj.org](mailto:rac@urj.org) Visit our website at [www.rac.org](http://www.rac.org)

April 7, 2014

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, the Washington office of the Union for Reform Judaism whose 900 congregations across North America encompass 1.3 million Reform Jews, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, whose membership includes 2,000 Reform rabbis, I urge you to support and co-sponsor the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA, H.R. 1199/S. 403) and the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA, H.R. 1652/S. 1088), to ensure that all students have safe and supportive learning environments free from harassment and discrimination.

The Reform Jewish Movement has long been active in the struggle for civil rights for all Americans, including members of the LGBT community. As people of faith, our holy texts teach us that all people are created in the Divine image, *b'tselem Elohim* (Gen. 1:27), and should thus be treated with respect and dignity. As Jews, our tradition and history teach us that we should not stand by as others suffer— we envision a government which “to bigotry gives no sanction, to persecution no assistance” (George Washington, in a letter to Moses Seixas, 1790). Yet LGBT students are frequently victimized in their own schools and at the hands of their fellow students.

According to a 2011 study of more than 8,500 LGBT middle and high school students across the U.S., eight in ten reported experiencing harassment at school because of their sexual orientation and nearly two-thirds because of their gender expression. Moreover, over a third of LGBT students have reported being physically harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Evidence has shown that harassment and intimidation has a significant impact on the psychological, emotional, and academic welfare of LGBT students.

The Safe School Improvement Act (SSIA) would ensure that school and districts develop and implement comprehensive student conduct policies that include clear prohibitions against bullying and harassment. Furthermore, this legislation would ensure that schools focus on effective prevention strategies to protect students. The Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA) would establish a comprehensive federal prohibition against discrimination and harassment of LGBT students in public elementary and secondary schools across the country. SNDA would provide much needed federal protection for LGBT students and their families and friends.

At its root, this issue is about the welfare of children, and the basic right of all Americans to a quality education, free from daily physical violence, intimidation, and persecution. The Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA, H.R. 1199/S. 403) and the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA, H.R. 1652/S. 1088) are important steps toward this goal. I urge you to support and co-sponsor SSIA and SNDA to make schools a safe place for all students.

Sincerely,

Rabbi David Saperstein  
Director



*The Religious Action Center pursues social justice and religious liberty by mobilizing the Jewish community and serving as its advocate in Washington, D.C. The Center is led by the Commission on Social Action of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union for Reform Judaism (and its affiliates) and is supported by the congregations of the Union.*





April 8, 2014

U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative:

On behalf of National PTA's more than four million members, I write to request your co-sponsorship of the Safe Schools Improvement Act (H.R. 1199), bipartisan legislation that would help to ensure that all children are able to learn in a safe and positive environment free of bullying and harassment.

As the nation's oldest and largest volunteer child advocacy organization, National PTA has long advocated for the health and wellbeing of all children. PTA believes that the safety of children in school settings is a fundamental right and therefore we advocate for policies and programs that address the prevention, intervention, and elimination of bullying to allow every child full access to educational opportunities.

The Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA) would amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to require K-12 public schools to enact policies to address student-to-student bullying and harassment. Research shows that bullying is a pervasive problem in U.S. schools, as approximately 28 percent of students ages 12-18 report being bullied and 30 percent admit to bullying others.<sup>1</sup> Both bullying other children and being the target of bullies can have lifelong consequences. Students who bully as children often continue abusive behavior into adulthood and in addition to emotional damage, students who experience bullying show decreased academic achievement and are more likely to miss, skip, or drop out of school.<sup>2</sup>

PTA believes that in order for a bullying prevention policy to be effective it must include the training of educators, parents, and students. We are therefore pleased that the SSIA not only requires the development and implementation of an anti-bullying and harassment policy but also that all students, teachers, and parents be educated annually on the policy. PTA also promotes disciplinary interventions that emphasize the positive behavior of students and we therefore strongly support the SSIA's encouragement of positive and preventative approaches to school discipline.

National PTA thanks you for your consideration of this request and looks forward to working with you to ensure that every child is guaranteed a safe learning environment. We urge you to contact Valeria Carranza ([Valeria.Carranza@mail.house.gov](mailto:Valeria.Carranza@mail.house.gov)) in Congresswoman Linda Sánchez's office to



cosponsor the Safe Schools Improvement Act (H.R. 1199). Additionally, if we can be of assistance please contact Jessica Seitz, Education Policy Analyst, at [jseitz@pta.org](mailto:jseitz@pta.org) or (703) 518-1249.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Otha E. Thornton Jr.".

Otha E. Thornton, Jr.  
President  
National PTA

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<sup>1</sup> Stopbullying.gov. (2013). Facts About Bullying. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services. Available online at: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/news/media/facts/>

<sup>2</sup> Stopbullying.gov. (2013). Effects of Bullying. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services. Available online at: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/effects/index.html>



April 8, 2014

United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of National PTA's more than four million members, I write to request your co-sponsorship of the Safe Schools Improvement Act (S.403), bipartisan legislation that would help to ensure that all children are able to learn in a safe and positive environment free of bullying and harassment.

As the nation's oldest and largest volunteer child advocacy organization, National PTA has long advocated for the health and wellbeing of all children. PTA believes that the safety of children in school settings is a fundamental right and therefore we advocate for policies and programs that address the prevention, intervention, and elimination of bullying to allow every child full access to educational opportunities.

The Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA) would amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to require K-12 public schools to enact policies to address student-to-student bullying and harassment. Research shows that bullying is a pervasive problem in U.S. schools, as approximately 28 percent of students ages 12-18 report being bullied and 30 percent admit to bullying others.<sup>1</sup> Both bullying other children and being the target of bullies can have lifelong consequences. Students who bully as children often continue abusive behavior into adulthood and in addition to emotional damage, students who experience bullying show decreased academic achievement and are more likely to miss, skip, or drop out of school.<sup>2</sup>

PTA believes that in order for a bullying prevention policy to be effective it must include the training of educators, parents, and students. We are therefore pleased that the SSIA not only requires the development and implementation of an anti-bullying and harassment policy but also that all students, teachers, and parents be educated annually on the policy. PTA also promotes disciplinary interventions that emphasize the positive behavior of students and we therefore strongly support the SSIA's encouragement of positive and preventative approaches to school discipline.

National PTA thanks you for your consideration of this request and looks forward to working with you to ensure that every child is guaranteed a safe learning environment. We urge you to contact Christina Baumgardner ([Christina\\_baumgardner@casey.senate.gov](mailto:Christina_baumgardner@casey.senate.gov)) in Senator Casey's office to



cosponsor the Safe Schools Improvement Act (S.403). Additionally, if we can be of assistance please contact Jessica Seitz, Education Policy Analyst, at [jseitz@pta.org](mailto:jseitz@pta.org) or (703) 518-1249.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Otha E. Thornton Jr.".

Otha E. Thornton, Jr.  
President  
National PTA

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<sup>1</sup> Stopbullying.gov. (2013). Facts About Bullying. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services. Available online at: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/news/media/facts/>

<sup>2</sup> Stopbullying.gov. (2013). Effects of Bullying. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services. Available online at: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/effects/index.html>



Sexuality Information and Education  
Council of the United States

April 8, 2014

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), an organization concerned about the sexual health education and well-being of people of all ages and particularly our nation's youth, I urge you to actively support and cosponsor the *Student Non-Discrimination Act* (SNDA, H.R. 1652/S. 1088) and the *Safe Schools Improvement Act* (SSIA, H.R. 1199/S. 403). Bullying and harassment in schools are pervasive problems with serious consequences for students. SNDA and SSIA are two pieces of legislation that would help create safe and healthy spaces for students to learn.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2011 over 20% of high school students reported being bullied on school property in the previous year.<sup>1</sup> This problem is even more prevalent for students who identify as or are perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT). Eight of ten LGBT students experienced bullying in the form of verbal harassment, while four of ten had been physically harassed at school.<sup>2</sup> Intimidation at school negatively affects LGBT students' attendance, academic performance, educational ambitions, and psychological health. LGBT youth earn grade point averages three-tenths of a point below students who were not harassed, are less likely to pursue postsecondary education, and have higher levels of depression and anxiety compared to their non-LGBT peers.<sup>3</sup>

SNDA would establish a comprehensive federal prohibition against discrimination, including harassment, in public elementary and secondary schools based on a student's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. SNDA would provide LGBT students with long overdue and much needed explicit federal protections against discrimination and harassment. It would also protect students with LGBT parents and friends.

SSIA specifically targets bullying and would require all public K-12 schools to enact an anti-bullying policy. This legislation would include specific protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Further, SSIA would require states to report data on bullying and harassment to the Department of Education and would require the Department of Education to provide Congress with a report on that data every two years.

Federal law currently prohibits bullying and harassment on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, disability, and national origin. Just like all students, LGBT students deserve safe and healthy learning environments where a culture of bullying is unacceptable and students are expected to participate in a culture of acceptance and tolerance.

We strongly encourage you to support the health and well-being of all students by cosponsoring SNDA and SSIA. Please contact Representative Linda Sánchez (5-6676) and Senator Robert Casey (4-6324) to cosponsor SSIA and Representative Jared Polis (5-2161) and Senator Al Franken (4-5641) to cosponsor SNDA. Thank you to the members of Congress who have already confirmed their support.

If we can provide you or your staff with any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at [jboyer@siecus.org](mailto:jboyer@siecus.org) or (202) 265-2405.

Sincerely,  
Jesseca Boyer  
Director of Public Policy

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2011*, MMWR Vol. 61:No. 4, accessed April 1, 2014, <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss6104.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Kosciw, J. G., et al (2012). *The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*, New York: GLSEN (2012) accessed April 1, 2014, <http://glsen.org/nscls>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of Advocates for Youth, an organization dedicated to the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people, we urge you to support two important bills, the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA, HR 1652 & S 1088) and the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA, HR 1199 & S 403). We applaud those who have already demonstrated their support as co-sponsors.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth face tremendous difficulties growing up in communities where heterosexuality is presented as the more acceptable orientation, youth are forced to conform to prevailing ideas about gender identity and expression, and being LGBT is regarded as deviant. Research in the United States suggests that homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism greatly contribute to higher rates of suicide, violence, victimization, risk behavior for HIV infection, and substance abuse among LGBT youth as compared to their heterosexual peers. According to a study by the Gay Lesbian & Straight Education Network of over 8,500 LGBT youth, over 80 percent reported being verbally harassed in the last year because of their sexual orientation and over 10 percent reported being physically assaulted because of their gender expression. Almost one third of LGBT students reported missing at least one day of school in the past month because of safety concerns.

For too long, our LGBT youth have been discriminated against in the classroom. The Student Non-Discrimination Act would prohibit discrimination against students based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as ensure that all students have access to an education in a safe environment free from harassment, bullying, intimidation, or violence. The Safe Schools Improvement Act would establish policies that prevent and prohibit conduct, including bullying and harassment. Together, these two bills would dramatically improve the school climate for LGBT youth and allies to feel safe, supported, and accepted in their school communities.

No young person should feel unsafe in their school because of who they are. Bullying and harassment have no place in our educational system, and SNDA and SSIA help us to protect all young people from being targeted based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. We urge you to support and cosponsor SNDA and SSIA.

Please contact Representative Jared Polis (5-2161) and Senator Al Franken (4-5641) to cosponsor SNDA, and Representative Linda Sanchez (5-6676) and Senator Robert Casey (4-6324) to cosponsor SSIA.

Sincerely,



Debra Hauser  
President, Advocates for Youth





Build Power Take Action Create Change

April 9, 2014

United States Congress  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Member of Congress:

As the executive director of the oldest national organization advocating for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) equality and justice, I write today to urge you to support and co-sponsor the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA) (S. 1088/H.R. 1652) and the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA) (S. 403/H.R. 1199).

SNDA would establish a comprehensive federal prohibition against discrimination and harassment based on a student's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity in public elementary and secondary schools across the country. The Act would provide LGBT students with long overdue and much needed explicit federal protections against discrimination and harassment. The legislation also protects students who associate with LGBT people, including students with LGBT parents and friends.

According to the 2011 National School Climate Survey, 63.5% of students felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation, and 43.9% because of their gender expression. Additionally, 60.4% of students who were harassed or assaulted in school did not report the incident to school staff, most often believing little to no action would be taken or the situation could become worse if reported. Furthermore, students who experienced higher levels of victimization because of their sexual orientation were three times more likely to have missed school in the past month than those who experienced lower levels (57.9% vs. 19.6%).

SSIA would amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to require school districts in states that receive ESEA funds to adopt codes of conduct to specifically prohibit bullying and harassment, including on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and religion. Additionally, SSIA would require that states report data on bullying and harassment to the Department of Education. The Department of Education would then be obligated to provide Congress with a report on the state reported data.

Most importantly, as shown by the recent rash of suicides of bullied children across the nation, these bills are part of a comprehensive preventative strategy to ensure that youth survive the years they spend in school. No parent should ever again have to learn that their child has taken his or her life due to bullying and harassment from a peer that was entirely **preventable**.

SNDA and SSIA will assist in creating a welcoming environment for all students and ensure that children are able to focus on education, rather than merely survival. Once enacted, these protections will help create a better educated, more productive population, able to contribute fully to the general welfare of our nation. Again, we urge you to support SNDA (S. 1088/ H.R. 1652) and SSIA (S. 403/H.R. 1199) as a co-sponsor of this essential legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rea Carey".

Rea Carey  
Executive Director

April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of PACER Center, an organization that has been serving parents of children with disabilities since 1978, we write to urge you to support and cosponsor the Safe Schools Improvement Act (S. 403/H.R. 1199) and the Student Non-Discrimination Act (S. 1088/H.R. 1652). With your support, we can move toward creating an environment that keeps ALL students, including those with disabilities, not only safe from harmful behavior, but surrounded by an atmosphere of acceptance of differences, kindness toward others, and inclusion.

PACER Center is a Minnesota-based nonprofit formed in 1978 to help parents understand special education laws and to provide support to families. PACER initiated the National Bullying Prevention Center in 2006, after receiving many heartbreaking calls from parents about their children with disabilities being involved in bullying situations. PACER's bullying prevention efforts are noteworthy because they support ALL students—including those without disabilities—along with their families, schools, and the community.

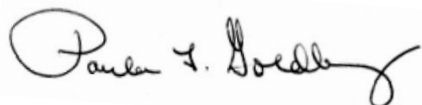
PACER is working to create a paradigm shift in society's views about bullying. Instead of seeing bullying as an accepted behavior and a natural part of childhood, we need to understand that bullying has a significant impact on the lives of children, especially those with disabilities. Children with disabilities are already so often vulnerable and when they are being bullied, their vulnerability magnifies. This can lead to additional challenges to learning in school, including fear of going to school, social isolation, and physical and emotional issues such as depression, anxiety, and lack of self-worth.

The Safe Schools Improvement Act would help ensure that all students in the United States, regardless of demographic, will have access to a safe and supportive school environment within which they can pursue academic achievements to the best of their ability. Bullying substantially interferes with a student's ability to learn, and a federal law against bullying will help protect students from the devastating and long-lasting effects of bullying.

The Student Non-Discrimination Act addresses the particular vulnerability of students who are, or perceived to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender to bullying and harassment. Every student has the right to an education free of discrimination. This bill would help protect vulnerable students and make schools safer, more inclusive, and more successful.

We urge you to contact Representative Linda Sánchez (5-6676) and Senator Robert Casey (4-6324) to cosponsor SSIA and Representative Jared Polis (5-2161) and Senator Al Franken (4-5641) to cosponsor SNDA. Thank you to the members of Congress who have already registered their support.

Sincerely,



Paula Goldberg  
Executive Director, PACER Center



April 11, 2014

United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN), I am writing to express support for the Safe Schools Improvement Act, sponsored by Rep. Linda Sánchez and the Student Non-Discrimination Act, sponsored by Rep. Jared Polis. For nearly 25 years, GLSEN has worked to create safe and supportive schools for all students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. We firmly believe that passage of these bills is an instrumental component of achieving that goal.

Today is GLSEN's annual Day of Silence. Hundreds of thousands of students across the United States have taken a vow of silence for the day to draw attention to anti-LGBT bullying and harassment in schools – behavior that we know has serious consequences. Eight in ten lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students report being verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation, and nearly two-thirds harassed because of their gender expression. Such harassment has detrimental impacts on students' long-term social, academic, psychological and physical well-being, including increased rates of absenteeism and depression and lower grade point averages and educational aspirations.

To most effectively address bullying, harassment and discrimination, it's essential to have effective laws in place. The Safe Schools Improvement Act would empower states to develop anti-bullying laws that best meet their needs, so long as those laws meet basic, fact-based criteria to ensure their effectiveness, including the enumeration of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability and religion. The legislation would also streamline data collection on bullying and harassment to help states better address the issue. The Student Non-Discrimination Act would ensure that LGBT students can no longer be discriminated against in public school simply for being who they are.

The Safe Schools Improvement Act has the support of 193 bipartisan cosponsors in the House and 44 bipartisan cosponsors in the Senate. It also has the support of the National Safe Schools Partnership, a coalition of 115 leading national organizations in the fields of education, health, youth development, civil rights, and religion and includes such organizations as Elementary and Secondary School Principals, the American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association, and the Boy Scouts of America. The Student Non-Discrimination Act also has strong support in Congress, with 177 bipartisan cosponsors in the House and 39 cosponsors in the Senate, and the support of over 100 leading national organizations.

If you have not yet cosponsored these critically important bills, we hope you will join your colleagues in doing so. If you already have, we send our sincere thanks for your ongoing support. Together, we can make schools safe for all of America's students.

Sincerely,

Eliza Byard, PhD  
Executive Director



April 11, 2014

United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN), I am writing to express support for the Safe Schools Improvement Act, sponsored by Sen. Bob Casey and the Student Non-Discrimination Act, sponsored by Sen. Al Franken. For nearly 25 years, GLSEN has worked to create safe and supportive schools for all students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. We firmly believe that passage of these bills is an instrumental component of achieving that goal.

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