

June 9, 2026

Dear Members of Congress,

In light of escalating attacks on the right of students to an education free from discrimination and harassment, Advocates for Trans Equality (A4TE), on behalf of 60 undersigned civil rights organizations and LGBTQI+ community organizations write to express unconditional support for transgender students and urge Congress to protect equal educational opportunity by defending safe and inclusive learning environments that respect the rights of all students, including transgender, nonbinary, and intersex students. All students benefit from inclusive policies that explicitly protect all students and establish a safer educational environment.

Research shows that LGBTQI+ students deeply need these inclusive policies to access equal education alongside their peers, especially in light of pervasive harassment and bullying. The 2025 National School Climate Survey of LGBTQI+ students found that 68 percent of all participants experienced harassment or assault because of their gender identity or gender expression.<sup>1</sup> In addition to dire implications for youth mental health, this harassment results in lower academic performance by driving students to disengage, miss class, change schools, or drop out completely.<sup>2</sup> According to the most recent data, 7 percent of LGBTQ+ students have changed schools because they felt uncomfortable or unsafe, with trans students accounting for the majority of this figure.<sup>3</sup>

LGBTQI+ students also disproportionately encounter other forms of discrimination that prevent them from fully participating in their education and expose them to harm. According to the 2025 National School Climate Survey, 41 percent of trans youth were barred from using the correct bathrooms and more than a third (36 percent) were barred from locker rooms.<sup>4</sup> Forcing transgender students to use school facilities that *do not align* with their gender identity and/or presentation present clear safety risks. Research has shown that one in three (36 percent) trans and nonbinary students barred from using the appropriate bathroom or locker room reported having been sexually assaulted in the previous 12 months, compared to a victimization rate of about 24 percent among

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<sup>1</sup> Glisten (2026). The 2025 National School Climate Survey: School experiences of LGBTQ+ Youth in the U.S. New York: Glisten; <https://glisten.org/nscs2025/>.

<sup>2</sup> Nath, R., Matthews, D.D., Hobaica, S., DeChants, J.P., Eden, T.M., Taylor, A.B., & Suffredini, K. (2026). 2025 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People. West Hollywood, California: The Trevor Project. <https://doi.org/10.70226/EKGT3197>; AJ Muonagolu, "Beyond their 'transness': Trans teens living in Texas after SB 14," KXAN, March 26, 2026, <https://www.kxan.com/news/texas/beyond-their-transness-trans-teens-living-in-texas-after-sb-14/>; "Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA) of 2021," GLSEN, accessed June 9, 2026, [https://glisten.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/GLSEN\\_Safe\\_School\\_Improvement\\_Act\\_Factsheet-2.pdf](https://glisten.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/GLSEN_Safe_School_Improvement_Act_Factsheet-2.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Glisten (2026).

<sup>4</sup> Glisten (2026).

transgender students at schools with inclusive policies.<sup>5</sup> Tolerating physical and sexual assault against transgender students makes everyone less safe by harming bystanders who witness it and perpetuating a culture permissive of sexual assault and violence.

Despite these alarming statistics, a growing number of states have passed laws discriminating against transgender youth—banning them from bathrooms, excluding them from sports, and erasing them from curriculum and library books.<sup>6</sup> As demonstrated at the state level, these policies put LGBTQI+ students in harm’s way. Recent FBI data shows that in states that have passed these types of laws, anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes in schools quadrupled.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, policies that support transgender students improve their academic and mental health outcomes. Adopting inclusive anti-bullying policies, providing students with support they can trust, and creating inclusive curriculums are critical protective factors for these students.<sup>8</sup> For example, even something as simple as affirming trans students at school by respecting their name and pronouns yields better mental health outcomes for these youth, including strikingly lower rates of attempted suicide.<sup>9</sup>

Like all youth, LGBTQI+ youth who are accepted by adults in their life are more likely to thrive. School is an essential source of support and mentorship, especially for LGBTQI+ youth, who face high rates of familial rejection due to their identity. Research shows that LGBTQI+ youth who have just one supportive adult in their lives were 40% less likely to attempt suicide.<sup>10</sup> Fortunately, 70 percent of LGBTQ+ students in the 2025 National School Climate Survey reported knowing six or more supportive adults at

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<sup>5</sup> Murchison GR, Agénor M, Reisner SL, Watson RJ. School Restroom and Locker Room Restrictions and Sexual Assault Risk Among Transgender Youth. *Pediatrics*. 2019 Jun;143(6):e20182902. doi: 10.1542/peds.2018-2902. Epub 2019 May 6. PMID: 31061223; PMCID: PMC8849575.

<sup>6</sup> Movement Advancement Project. 2026. “Equality Maps: Don’t Say LGBTQ.” <https://mapresearch.org/equality-map/lgbtq-curricular-laws/#dont-say-lgbtq>. Data as of June 8, 2026; Movement Advancement Project. 2026. “Equality Maps: Bans on Transgender Youth Participation in Sports.” <https://mapresearch.org/equality-map/bans-on-transgender-youth-participation-in-sports/>. Data as of June 8, 2026; Movement Advancement Project. 2026. “Equality Maps: Bans on Transgender People’s Use of Public Bathrooms & Facilities According to Their Gender Identity.” <https://mapresearch.org/equality-map/bans-on-transgender-people-using-public-bathrooms-and-facilities-according-to-their-gender-identity/>. Data as of June 8, 2026.

<sup>7</sup> Laura Meckler, Hannah Natanson, John D. Harden, “In states with laws targeting LGBTQ issues, school hate crimes quadrupled,” *The Washington Post*, March 13, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2024/03/12/school-lgbtq-hate-crimes-incidents/>.

<sup>8</sup> Glisten (2026); Matthews et.al. (2026).

<sup>9</sup> The Trevor Project. (2021). 2021 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health. West Hollywood, California: The Trevor Project; <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2021/?section=AffirmingSpaces>.

<sup>10</sup> “Trevor Project Research Brief, Accepting Adults Reduce Suicide Attempts Among LGBTQ Youth,” The Trevor Project, June 2026, accessed June 9, 2026, [https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Trevor-Project-Accepting-Adult-Research-Brief\\_June-2019.pdf](https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Trevor-Project-Accepting-Adult-Research-Brief_June-2019.pdf).

school.<sup>11</sup> Educators help ensure these students are supported when they experience harassment or discrimination or are struggling with their mental health.

Schools have the responsibility to address widespread and escalating harassment confronting LGBTQI+ students by adopting anti-bullying policies that clearly protect students based on enumerated characteristics. Enumerated policies are associated with lower rates of LGBTQI+ student victimization, making them a powerful tool to address this pressing issue.<sup>12</sup> While 19 states and the District of Columbia have mandated anti-bullying policies protecting transgender and LGBTQI+ students, South Dakota and Missouri have taken the extraordinary step of prohibiting schools from including gender identity or sexual orientation in their anti-bullying policies.<sup>13</sup>

Inclusive curriculums are another essential way that schools can create a welcoming environment for kids of all backgrounds. Decades of research have shown that providing LGBTQI+ students access to instruction about LGBTQI+ topics is associated with better attendance, better mental health, less severe bullying and harassment, and stronger feelings of belonging and peer acceptance.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, students with access to LGBTQI+ library books and resources are less likely to report feeling unsafe because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.<sup>15</sup>

Schools have a legal and moral responsibility to ensure that all their students can access a safe and respectful learning environment where they can grow and thrive. Educators and schools across the country are stepping up to protect their LGBTQI+ students by providing them access to safe school facilities, respecting their identity, teaching inclusive curriculum, and providing trustworthy resources and support. The undersigned organizations urge members of Congress to ensure that schools can continue providing the resources, support, and protections that all students—including transgender, nonbinary, and intersex students—need to learn.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Trans Equality (A4TE)  
ACT UP New York  
Advocates for Youth

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<sup>11</sup> Glisten (2026).

<sup>12</sup> “Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA) of 2021.”

<sup>13</sup> Movement Advancement Project. “Equality Maps: Safe Schools Laws.” <https://mapresearch.org/equality-map/safe-school-laws>. Data as of June 8, 2026.

<sup>14</sup> GLSEN (2024). *Inclusive Learning: A Synthesis of 20+ years of Research on the Education and Wellbeing Impacts of Inclusive Curriculum, Instruction, and School Books*. New York: GLSEN.

<sup>15</sup> GLSEN (2024).

American Atheists  
American Civil Liberties Union  
American Humanist Association  
Aunties (& Friends) for Liberation  
Authors Against Book Bans  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
Blue Future  
California Federation of Teachers  
CenterLink: The Community of LGBTQ Centers  
Christopher Street Project  
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund  
EducateUS  
Education Law Center-PA  
Equality California  
Equality California  
Equality Federation  
Equality Virginia  
Feminist Majority  
Freedom Writers Collaborative  
GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD Law)  
Glisten (Formerly GLSEN)  
Human Rights Campaign  
Impact Fund  
Indivisible Westside Los Angeles  
interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Lambda Legal  
Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition  
Minority Veterans of America  
MomsRising  
Movement Advancement Project  
National Association for the Education of Young Children  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Education Association  
National LGBTQ+ Bar Association  
National Organization for Women  
National Women's Law Center Action Fund  
NBJC

PFLAG National  
Public Justice  
Reproductive Freedom for All  
Rocky Mountain Equality  
Safer Country  
Silver State Equality  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)  
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network  
Teaching for Change  
The GLO Center  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
The Trevor Project  
Trans formative Schools  
Trans Maryland  
Transathlete  
Transgender Education Network of Texas  
Transgender Law Center