

2022 Public Policy Agenda: Overview

GLSEN was founded over thirty years ago by educators and is the leading national organization on LGBTQ+ issues in K-12 education systems. Our research on LGBTQ+ youth over the past two decades has identified four core supports that schools can implement to encourage positive school transformation: comprehensive nondiscrimination and anti-bullying policies, affirming educators, inclusive curriculum, and access to GSAs (gender and sexuality alliances or gay-straight alliances) and other peer support networks.

We know that in order to learn, youth must be safe in their minds, hearts and bodies. We know that safety is not just about the important absence of harm. Safety requires the presence of affirmation and the conditions each learner needs to thrive in their classroom, hallways and school communities. Efforts to achieve equitable outcomes for LGBTQ+ youth in K-12 education systems must be grounded in racial, gender, and disability justice. When these **Four Supports** are in place, LGBTQ+ students, particularly those who are transgender, nonbinary, intersex, Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), and people with disabilities, experience less discrimination and bullying, greater academic achievement, such as higher GPAs, report better mental and emotional well-being, and experience more positive and welcoming school climates overall.

We have learned that when schools are safe, affirming and inclusive for the most marginalized, every student does better. A core part of our work is centering those most impacted by discriminatory learning environments. To say it simply — when a school is safer, more inclusive and more affirming for a Black transgender girl, it truly is safer, more inclusive and more affirming for all students.

GLSEN supports policies at the federal, state, and local levels that:

- Remove barriers experienced by LGBTQ+ young people and educators in K-12 education systems.
 - Examples include the **Equality Act**, **Safe Schools Improvement Act of 2021 (SSIA)**, and **Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act**.
- Affirm LGBTQ+ identities through supportive actions in K-12 education systems.
 - Examples include **state inclusive curricular standard legislation**, funding for LGBTQ+ affirming professional development for educators, LGBTQ+ affirming school-based supports including GSAs (Gender Sexuality Alliances or Gay Straight Alliances), and mental health programming.
- Advance equity by applying an intersectional lens to address the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ students and educators who are transgender, nonbinary, BIPOC, and people with disabilities.
 - Examples include federal regulations that establish **intersectional equity frameworks** and **state implementation of federal emergency relief funds** to best meet the needs of youth who experience marginalization during this time of mass disruption and trauma.

GLSEN opposes discriminatory and harmful policies at the federal, state, and local levels that:

- Target and harm transgender, nonbinary, intersex, and any K-12 student or educator who identifies as LGBTQ+.
 - Examples include **Trans Athletic Ban** policies and state laws creating barriers to transgender youth accessing trans-affirming healthcare.

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- Exclude or erase the experiences of LGBTQ+ people, particularly those who are BIPOC, people with disabilities, experiencing homelessness, or otherwise at the intersection of two or more communities that experience marginalization, from K-12 education.
 - Examples include **discriminatory curriculum bans**, including those that prohibit positive and affirming representations of LGBTQ+ identities in schools and bans on honest teaching about race and racism.
- Weaken protections and supports for LGBTQ+ students and educators.
 - Examples include **the use of public dollars for private schools that sanction discrimination** on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and parental opt-out of inclusive curriculum.

Read our detailed 2022 Public Policy Agenda for additional information on GLSEN's public policy priorities.

About our Public Policy Agenda

To align and fulfill the purpose of our mission it is critical to center the priorities that young people have identified as crucial to their ability to thrive in K-12 learning communities and beyond. The **2022 Public Policy Agenda** is informed by several youth-led policy platforms, including GLSEN's **National Student Council**, the platform adopted by **A New Deal for Youth**, and the Southern Coalition for Social Justice's **Liberate to Educate Policy Platform**, developed within the Coalition's Youth Justice Project.

Note that the examples provided here and in our detailed **2022 Public Policy Agenda** are non-exhaustive. If you would like to request GLSEN's endorsement of legislation or other public policy proposal, please contact us at policy@glSEN.org.