

# Public Policy Postcard

**APRIL 2022**

Welcome to the **GLSEN Policy Postcard**, a monthly newsletter for GLSEN staff and GLSEN Policy Coordinators to keep abreast of the happenings in the LGBTQ+ and education spheres. The goals of this project are to facilitate communication, community, and collaboration, so please feel free to ask questions, provide comments, or share ideas at [policy@glsen.org](mailto:policy@glsen.org).

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## Toplines and Fast Facts

### Day of Silence

April 22 is the Day of Silence! Learn more about how to participate in the Day of Silence, GLSEN's virtual Breaking the Silence Rally, and resources in support of Day of Silence activities [here](#). The Public Policy office is working in partnership with Policy Coordinators and our coalition partners to secure Day of Silence proclamations at the state and local levels, as well as a federal Congressional Resolution. You can join our efforts by downloading our [Sample Day of Silence Resolution](#) and requesting that your local government and local education agencies make a proclamation as well.

### ACTION ALERT

#### Tell Congress to Support the Safe Schools Improvement Act

Please take the opportunity to [send a message to your legislators in support of the SSIA](#) if you have not done so already. This critical legislation will improve school climates for LGBTQ+ students and all students. So, we must continue to garner support from Congress. You can [take part in this action here](#). Juste, State and Local Policy Manager, to propose agenda items.

### ACTION ALERT

#### Tell Your Senators it's time to pass the Equality Act


Please continue to urge folks to contact their Senators asking them to pass the Equality Act, which will protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in all spheres of public life, including education. Participate in [this action alert](#) and disseminate it to your networks. To learn more about GLSEN's public policy advocacy, please take a look at our [2022 Public Policy Agenda](#).

### Next GLSEN Policy Coordinator Meeting

The next Policy Coordinator zoom call will take place on **April 20 at 8:00pm ET**. Note that the agenda for this call will be shared soon, so please contact Tessa Juste, State and Local Policy Manager, at [tessa.juste@glsen.org](mailto:tessa.juste@glsen.org), to propose agenda items.

## Administrative Updates

GLSEN recently authored a public comment letter calling for expanded LGBTQ+ inclusive data collection in the US Department of Education's (USED) National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The NAEP measures student achievement and learning experiences across academic subjects, and the findings inform K-12 education policies and practices. In the letter, GLSEN asks the survey be updated to include nonbinary survey measures, and self-report options for students and teachers to report their sexual orientation, gender identity, and intersex status. The full public comment letter is available [here](#).



This letter is a part of a broader conversation about LGBTQ+ inclusion in data collection, crystalized in an [open letter](#) signed by 190 organizations, including GLSEN, asking health, education, corporate, government, and other policy leaders to ensure that data is disaggregated by sexual orientation, gender identity, and intersex status so as to accurately inform policy decisions that impact the lives of LGBTQ+ people. The open letter uplifted the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's (NASEM) [report](#) on how best to measure sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation in data collection. In a press release about the open letter, GLSEN Chief of Staff and Deputy Executive Director for Policy and Research Aaron Ridings said, "We know that bullying and harassment disproportionately impacts LGBTQ+ youth and need data disaggregated by sexual orientation, gender identity, and intersex status to fully understand the scope of the problem and identify solutions that promote safe, welcoming schools for all young people." You can find the full press release [here](#).

Finally, last month GLSEN signed on to a letter, led by the National Women's Law Center, on the subject of sexual harassment and nondiscrimination protections in educational institutions under Title IX. The letter calls for USED to make changes undoing the damage of the prior administration's Title IX rule, which required schools to ignore some instances of sexual harassment and imposed procedural barriers to addressing those occurrences of sexual harassment that schools were not forced to ignore under the rule. The letter also urged USED to clarify protections for LGBTQ+ students under Title IX and to undo the prior administration's rule changes, which expanded the ability to using religion as a pretext discriminate on the basis of sex, including sexual orientation and gender identity. You can read the letter [here](#).

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## State Public Policy Updates

Throughout the state legislative cycle GLSEN tracks bills that have been introduced in all 50 state legislatures, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories. Currently GLSEN is tracking 22 bills that are affirming of LGBTQ+ students and inclusive K-12 learning communities, and 190 bills that are attacks targeting LGBTQ+ youth. Among the bills that we are watching closely right now are Don't Say Gay bills containing provisions similar to the bill enacted in Florida, in Tennessee (HB 800), Louisiana (HB 837), and Ohio (HB 616). To learn more about the specific content and legislative progress of the state bills that GLSEN is tracking, you can visit our [2022 Affirmative Bill Tracker](#) and our [2022 Negative Bill Tracker](#).

Despite a robust campaign of local, state, and national opposition, Florida Governor DeSantis signed the Don't Say Gay bill. This law targets LGBTQ+ youth with an exclusionary curriculum ban that has a chilling effect on supportive educators and erases LGBTQ+ experiences and contributions to history and society from classroom lesson plans. A joint statement from GLSEN's Executive Director, Melanie Willingham-Jaggers, the Co-Chair of GLSEN Collier County, Chris Kobizina, and the Chair of GLSEN Tampa Bay, Gregg Coldiron, was released last month, condemning the bill as a continuation of Governor DeSantis' pattern of attacking LGBTQ+ communities in Florida. The statement notes that, "This latest attack has already had a chilling effect on LGBTQ+ youth, who already experience victimization such as bullying, harassment, and discrimination." You can read GLSEN's full statement [here](#).

In the course of the fight against Florida's Don't Say Gay bill GLSEN also issued a critique of the choice that some corporations, and in particular Disney, took to remove themselves from the conversation about the legislation while it was being debated in the legislature. In a statement, GLSEN's Executive Director Melanie Willingham-Jaggers emphasized that, "Silence and erasure can take many forms, but what is happening right now is that corporations practice silence while giving money to politicians who are working to erase the vulnerable population GLSEN is working to protect," and that "We have an expectation that those we partner with would not work against us...". The full statement is available [here](#).



## Updates from the Hill

GLSEN continues to advocate for the passage of the Equality Act. Last month GLSEN signed on to a letter led by Advocates for Youth, urging the Senate to Pass the Equality Act. The letter emphasized the particular impact that this landmark legislation would have on LGBTQ+ youth and cited GLSEN's 2019 National School Climate Survey data about students reporting that they feel unsafe in school, hear anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric in their learning communities, and experience victimization based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The Equality Act would establish federal nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ people, not only in public education, but also in housing, employment, credit, public spaces, federally funded programs, and jury service. You can read the letter in full [here](#), and if you have not done so already, you can use this [action alert](#) to send a letter to your Senators, telling them that it is time to pass the Equality Act!

Last month GLSEN also signed on to Congress urging a \$30 million funding increase to the US State Department's Global Equity Fund and \$30 million to the US Agency for International Development (USAID) Hub's Protection of LGBTQI+ Persons budget. The letter, led by the Human Rights Campaign, specifies that this additional funding will greatly support LGBTQ+ communities around the world, many of which face state-sponsored criminalization, stigmatization, and discrimination against people on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity. This funding would be used by the State Department and USAID to help meet the commitments of the Biden Administration's Memorandum on Advancing Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Persons Around the World. You can read the full letter to Congress [here](#).

## Supreme Court Updates

Last month, GLSEN signed on to an amicus brief authored by Lambda Legal, opposing dramatically broadened protections for public school staff to exercise their religion at work when students could feel pressured to join. The lawsuit, *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, revolves around a public school football coach whose public prayers while acting in his role as coach had a coercive impact on students in violation of the First Amendment Establishment Clause and created a particular risk of harmful impacts on any LGBTQ+ students present. You can read the entire amicus brief [here](#).



## Public Policy Moves to Watch



April 22 is the Day of Silence! The GLSEN Day of Silence is a national student-led demonstration where LGBTQ+ youth and their allies take a vow of silence in protest of the victimization the LGBTQ+ students experience in school. This is followed by a Breaking the Silence Rally where students come together in community, virtually and in person, to break their silence and build momentum for making K-12 learning communities more LGBTQ+ inclusive and affirming. GLSEN Policy is contributing to the upcoming day of silence by supporting a Congressional Day of Silence Resolution sponsored by U.S. Representative Mark Takano (CA-41), and seeking Day of Silence proclamations from state and local leaders across the country. You can check out our day of silence sample resolution [here](#), and you can join our efforts by requesting that your local government and local education agency issue a proclamation of their own, using our sample language. If you do secure a local proclamation, please reach out to State and Local Policy Manager, Tessa Juste, at [tessa.juste@glsen.org](mailto:tessa.juste@glsen.org), so that GLSEN can lift up your work on this issue. For more information and Day of Silence resources you can go to [www.glsen.org/day-of-silence](http://www.glsen.org/day-of-silence), and you can join GLSEN for our virtual [Breaking the Silence Rally](#) on Instagram Live, April 22 at 7:00pm ET.

# What We're Watching in the News

## **"Don't Say Gay" Bill Significantly Affects Black & Latinx Queer Students.**

**Latinovations Staff. Latinovations, March 17, 2022.**

*This article is about the impact of the debate around Florida's Don't Say Gay Bill on LGBTQ+ youth who are Black and Latinx and cited data from GLSEN's 2019 National School Climate Survey.*

## **Educators Must Do More to Make Schools Safe & Inclusive.**

**Aaron Ridings. Los Angeles Blade, March 19, 2022.**

*This article lifts up the work that the federal government as well as state and local education agencies must do to strengthen programs and services for LGBTQ+ students to feel safe and affirmed in their learning communities. The article is by GLSEN Chief of Staff and Deputy Executive Director for Public Policy and Research, Aaron Ridings, with additional contributions from Federal Policy Manager, Bonnie Washick, and Director of the Research Institute, Joe Kosciw.*

## **Virginia is About to Enact a Florida-Style Law Censoring LGBTQ2S+ Education in Schools.**

**Ursula Muñoz-Schaefer. Xtra, March 24, 2022.**

*This article is about a recently enacted Virginia law that allows parents to review and opt their students out of LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum, and quotes Aaron Ridings, Chief of Staff and Deputy Director for Public Policy and Research.*

## **The New Head of GLSEN on How She'll Protect Queer Kids.**

**Trudy Ring. The Advocate, March 28, 2022.**

*This article shares GLSEN Executive Director Melanie Willingham-Jaggers' vision for a transformed education system that empowers and affirms LGBTQ+ and all marginalized youth and how we get there.*

## **Day of Silence 2022: Know Date, History and Significance of the Day Raising Awareness About Effects of Bullying & Harassment of LGBTQ Students.**

**Latestly Team. Latestly, April 8, 2022.**

*This article lifts up GLSEN's 2022 Day of Silence, explaining the purpose of the campaign and how to participate.*

**For assistance with media inquiries, please contact [info@glsen.org](mailto:info@glsen.org).**

## **QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, ADDITIONS?**

Have a note to add for next month's postcard? See a mistake that needs correcting? Want more resources or information? Let us know what more you would like, and even what you would like less of. Please contact [policy@glsen.org](mailto:policy@glsen.org).