

December 13, 2022

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
U.S. House of Representatives
2308 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-3212

Dear Congresswoman Maloney:

On behalf of the 3 million members of the National Education Association who are dedicated to teaching and supporting nearly 50 million students across America, thank you for holding tomorrow's hearing on the connection between extreme anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric and surging violence against LGBTQI+ individuals. We submit these comments for the record.

Educators strive to provide safe and welcoming schools by fighting for the rights of LGBTQI+ students and speaking out so that educators can love, marry, and raise a family with the partner of their choosing. All Americans deserve to walk comfortably in their identity and be true to themselves. But too many lawmakers, despite being elected to bring us together, are pursuing an agenda that is inciting fear, hatred, and even violence.

Whether at the federal or state level, anti-trans bills, "don't say gay" bills, and similar policies are attempts to silence the voices of LGBTQI+ individuals, including students. Frequently, the politicians who promote such legislation are the same ones who seek to divide Americans by race, class, and ethnicity. The aim is not to unite, but to stoke anxiety and ignorance that keeps citizens from realizing the power we have in coming together. We have experienced throughout our history similarly cynical attempts to scapegoat and malign marginalized communities.

In 2021, 340 anti-LGBTQI+ bills were introduced in state legislatures; as 2022 ends, such bills have been introduced in [23 states and signed in 13 states](#). The goal of these bills is only part of the problem; just as harmful is the rhetoric surrounding them, including false allegations that children are being "groomed." We see the consequences in the rise in hate crimes targeting LGBTQI+ individuals. The horrific mass shooting last month at Club Q in Colorado Springs, in which five people were murdered and more than a dozen were injured, is the most recent example.

This climate impacts students directly: A survey by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) revealed that 86 percent of LGBTQI+ students were harassed or assaulted at school based on characteristics including sexual orientation and gender expression. NEA educators support the Safe Schools Improvement Act (S. 2410/H.R. 4402) to protect students from harassment, by requiring codes of conduct specifically prohibiting bullying and harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and other characteristics.

Educators remain steadfastly dedicated to making schools safe for their students. We ask lawmakers to join us by condemning policies that put us in boxes based on what we look like or whom we love, and instead embracing measures to ensure we all have the freedom to be ourselves.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association