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Service Employees International Union
Harman Singh
Sikh Coalition
Bryan Fair
Southern Poverty Law Center
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UnidosUS

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Maya Wiley

The Honorable Jim Jordan
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary
United States House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Jamie Raskin
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary
United States House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

June 24, 2026

Dear Chairman Jordan and Ranking Member Raskin,

On behalf of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the ___ undersigned LGBTQ and education rights organizations, we write to remind you of the crucial role federal law and policies play in establishing, upholding, and enforcing students' legal rights against discrimination.¹ At a time when there are increasing threats and vulnerabilities, Congress should affirm and clarify that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is prohibited in educational systems.

In 2024, just over twenty-one percent of hate crimes were motivated by bias against sexual orientation or gender identity.² From May 2025 to May 2026, the FBI recorded 1,568 incidents of hate crimes motivated by the offender's bias against sexual orientation, and 504 incidents based upon a person's gender identity.³ Combating hate crime is a multi-faceted challenge, but investments in inclusive education promote awareness and create a personal connection in the classroom setting, which can prevent students from developing prejudices later in life.⁴

A student's sexual orientation or gender identity can have a significant impact on how they experience the world. It should not put them at risk for harm, exclusion, or "discriminatory barriers that unfairly limit or deny educational opportunity."⁵ It is crucial that schools implement evidence-based education policies and practices to ensure safe, healthy, and inclusive school environments for their entire student body. Intentional and meaningful

¹ See: Brown v. Board of Education (1954); Lau v. Nichols (1974); Plyler v. Doe (1982); Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; Age Discrimination Act of 1975

² <https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/hate-crime-statistics>

³ <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/explorer/crime/hate-crime>

⁴ <https://drexel.edu/soe/resources/student-teaching/advice/importance-of-cultural-diversity-in-classroom/>

⁵ <https://civilrights.org/value/education/>

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instruction can provide tools which enhance each student's sense of identity and foster inclusion in the classroom community.⁶ Respectful discussions of LGBTQ history and culture is a necessary element of inclusive instruction.

Teachers should receive evidence-based, culturally responsive training and other professional development⁷ to help them understand the struggles of their LGBTQ students and ensure that the lessons taught in their classroom are inclusive. Similar to sexual orientation, it is important that the school community respect each student's gender identity and how they would prefer to be recognized.⁸ Legislation should ensure that all students are safe and supported at school, including by ensuring their access to programs and facilities that match their gender identity.⁹ Affirming school environments which focus on positive youth development and social and emotional learning, acknowledge differences within the student body, and create a safe space for discussion alongside an academic curriculum are better equipped to ensure educational equity for LGBTQ students.

When organized efforts by third parties seeking to remove honest discussions about sexual orientation and gender identity interfere with students' ability to receive an inclusive education, the damage goes far beyond the direct harm to individual students or the educational materials being targeted. The community suffers indirect and lingering harm when schools are prevented from giving students tools to interact with people different from them "in a respectful, mature way that is essential for success in life outside the classroom."¹⁰ Schools attempting to avoid confrontation by voluntarily removing diversity-centered curriculum are not providing protected learning environments; instead, they are complicit in harming their students and communities.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and Learning for Justice (LFJ), its education arm, have made vital contributions to efforts to develop and maintain inclusive education that benefits all students and their communities. LFJ has long made valuable, well-researched educational materials on a wide variety of subjects available for educators' use. The SPLC has been at the forefront of legal actions opposing laws and policies that impose grossly overreaching censorship of curricula and discussion that put students and educators alike at risk.

In order to educate the next generation, strengthen our country, and live up to our ideals, all schools should be a safe environment for learning and critical analysis. Hate and discrimination should have no home or foothold in our public education systems. Congress must resoundingly affirm every child's right to be free from discrimination, harassment, bullying, and cyberbullying based on protected traits such as sexual orientation or gender identity.¹¹ There must be unwavering support for inclusive education, which provides students with "intellectual tools for reflection, continuous inquiry, constructive dialogue, and the

⁶ <https://drexel.edu/soe/resources/student-teaching/advice/importance-of-cultural-diversity-in-classroom/>

⁷ https://civilrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Civil-Rights-Principles-for-Safe-Healthy-and-Inclusive-School-Climates_2.pdf

⁸ <https://drexel.edu/soe/resources/student-teaching/advice/importance-of-cultural-diversity-in-classroom/>

⁹ https://civilrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Civil-Rights-Principles-for-Safe-Healthy-and-Inclusive-School-Climates_2.pdf

¹⁰ <https://drexel.edu/soe/resources/student-teaching/advice/importance-of-cultural-diversity-in-classroom/>

¹¹ https://civilrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Civil-Rights-Principles-for-Safe-Healthy-and-Inclusive-School-Climates_2.pdf

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possibility of changing one's perspective"¹² — tools which are necessary to help them to become better citizens. As you seek policies to improve education and its impact on the richness of our nation, it is crucial that the contributions and insights of organizations, such as SPLC and LFJ, that support and defend the rights of LGBTQ students and their families, are considered.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Trans Equality (A4TE)
Advocates for Youth
AFCP 4129
AFT
AFT 2121
AFT Guild, Local 1931
AFT New Jersey
AFT Vermont
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Atheists
Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families
Arkansas Education Association
Boulder family learning center
California Federation of Teachers
California Teachers Association
Center for Constitutional Rights
CenterLink
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Colorado Education Association
Connecticut Education Association
EducateUS
Education Minnesota
Education West Virginia
Equal Rights Advocates
Equality California
Equality Ohio
Feminist Majority
GLAAD
GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD Law)
Human Rights Campaign
Illinois Education Association
Immigration Equality
ISEA
Lambda Legal
LGBT Tech
Maine Education Association

¹² <https://www.splcenter.org/learning-for-justice/education-justice/>

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Maryland State Education Association
Massachusetts Teachers Association
Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition
Minority Veterans of America
Movement Advancement Project
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Jewish Women Arizona
National Education Association
National Education Association of New Mexico
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National LGBTQ+ Bar Association
National Women's Law Center
NBJC
Novato Federation of Teachers - Local 1986
Oasis Legal Services
Oregon Education Association
PFLAG Frederick
PFLAG National
PFLAG Sacramento
San Rafael Federation of Teachers
Serving at risk families everywhere, Inc.
Silver State Equality
Texas AFT
Texas State Teachers Association/ National Education Association
The Advocacy Institute
The Trevor Project
Transgender Law Center
Tucson Jewish Museum & Holocaust Center
Utah Education Association
Vermont-NEA
Wisconsin Education Association Council