



July 27, 2017

We, the undersigned organizations, are committed to improving the health, safety, and educational experience of children and youth. We are deeply concerned with proposed legislation in Texas that would seek to forbid transgender students from using restrooms and changing rooms consistent with their gender identity. This type of legislation is discriminatory and would cause hardships for students who already face a disproportionate amount of stress and bullying in schools.

Regarding attempts to discriminate against LGBTQ Texans and dictate school district policies, the original “bathroom bill” introduced during the regular session, SB6, was a far-reaching bill that mobilized strong opposition from local leaders and business groups. Similarly, CS HB 2899 in the House focused on denying transgender people access to bathrooms and changing rooms. Fortunately, neither bill passed during the regular session.

However, one of the most disturbing trends we saw during the ongoing debate was the willingness to double down on discrimination in public schools. The House bill sponsor, Rep. Simmons, said in a meeting with a business group that he would be willing to make the law apply only to public schools if that would reduce the business groups’ opposition. Sen. Kolkhorst’s anti-transgender SB 3, which passed the Senate last night, is much more closely tied to schools than her regular session bill, SB 6, was. Such a response underlines the discriminatory intent of these bills - there is no specific problem that the sponsor is trying to solve, and the substance of the policy is less important to the proponents than passing an anti-transgender piece of legislation.

Unfortunately, a bill like that would remove a school’s ability to accommodate its students in a way that respects and protects all students. These bills would put some of the most vulnerable children, transgender children, at risk for increased bullying and segregation from school

activities. We reject the assertions of Sen. Kolkhorst, Rep. Simmons, and any others who suggest that transgender students pose any kind of danger to other students at school, including in restrooms or locker rooms. These bills are simply not addressing a real problem. As education professionals who hold the well-being of our students as a top priority, we can assure the sponsors and the public that there is no actual need for these bills.

The Senate bill that passed last night joins four other anti-LGBTQ bills filed in the special session so far (HB46, HB50, SB 23, and SB 91). Each targets transgender people. SB 23 would prohibit cities and school districts from protecting LGBTQ people from discrimination at all. In the House, Representative Simmons introduced two bills: HB 46, which would prohibit municipalities and school districts from protecting LGBTQ people in restrooms, locker rooms, and other changing facilities; and HB50, the promised schools-only version of HB 46. SB 91 is effectively identical to SB 3, which imports HB 2-like mandatory anti-transgender discrimination in public subdivisions, including schools; overrides local nondiscrimination ordinances insofar as they protect LGBTQ people from discrimination in bathrooms and locker rooms; and takes an unnecessary and mean-spirited jab at transgender student athletes. These pieces of legislation are all troubling and they go against the best interest of school districts and the kids they serve.

We oppose any attempt to enshrine dangerous, discriminatory policies into law that would harm transgender students in Texas schools. If we truly wish to act in good conscience towards all children in schools, we must not enshrine discriminatory practices into the law, in any state.

Signed,

American Counseling Association
American School Counselor Association
American Federation of Teachers
National Association of College Admission Counselors
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of Social Workers, Texas Chapter
School Social Work Association of America
Texas American Federation of Teachers
American Association of University Women of Texas