



January 31, 2024

Virginia House Committee on Education - Early Childhood

House Committee Room A - 008,
General Assembly Building
1000 Bank St, Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee on Education,

I write to you on behalf of GLSEN, the leading national organization on LGBTQ+ issues in K-12 education. GLSEN is committed to ensuring that all youth – including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, nonbinary, Two-Spirit, and intersex youth – have equal opportunities to thrive, grow, and reach their full potential. GLSEN works to build safe and affirming learning environments for LGBTQ+ youth while advancing racial, gender, and disability justice in education settings.

GLSEN's [National School Climate Survey \(NSCS\)](#) has consistently found that students identify lower rates of bullying and harassment in schools where there is an anti-bullying policy that enumerates and expressly prohibits bullying and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Enumeration is necessary to protect all students as research has consistently shown that students experience less bullying, feel safer overall, and that teachers are more likely to intervene to prevent incidents of bullying in schools with enumerated policies. According to the NSCS (2021), only 13% of LGBTQ+ students [in Virginia](#) identified that they attended a school with a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy that included specific protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Only 11% had a policy or official guidelines to support transgender and nonbinary students.

Given the high percentages of LGBTQ+ students in Virginia who experience harassment at school, and the limited access to key resources and supports, we urge this committee to advance this bill and provide safe learning environments for all students. Twenty-one states and the District of Columbia have passed legislation that specifically prohibits bullying and harassment of students in K-12 schools based on sexual orientation and gender identity. We urge the Virginia legislature to pass and implement this common-sense, widely adopted policy with all due haste. Should you have any questions about the above information, please feel free to reach out to Rin Alajaji, State and Local Policy Manager, at rin.alajaji@glsen.org

Sincerely,

Brian Dittmeier
Director of Public Policy