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MEDIA ADVISORY

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Wendy Walsh, mother of Seth Walsh, to Testify in Support of ?Seth?s Law? ??

Assembly Education Committee will hear testimony Wednesday on AB 9 which seeks to create a safer school environment for California students

The bill is authored by Assemblymember Ammiano and co-sponsored by LGBT equality organizations ??

WHAT: Wendy Walsh, mother of Seth Walsh, a 13-year-old gay student from Tehachapi, CA who took his life in September 2010, will testify at the Assembly Education Committee hearing for ?Seth?s Law.? Seth Walsh faced years of relentless anti-gay harassment at school and ?Seth?s Law? (AB 9) is named in his honor. ??

?Seth?s Law? is a comprehensive bill that addresses school bullying by providing California schools with specific tools to prevent and respond to the pervasive problem in order to create a safe school environment for all students. When passed, it will ensure that every school in California implements updated anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies and programs that include actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, as well as race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, disability, and religion. ??

WHEN: Today, Wednesday, April 13, 2011, 1:30 p.m.

WHERE: State Capitol, Room 126, Sacramento, CA

In a recent national survey conducted by the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network, nine out of 10 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students report harassment at school. Last year in California, 62 percent of students who identify as transgender and 42 percent of students

who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual reported being harassed at school, according to the California Safe Schools Coalition.??

What's more, young people often face bullying and harassment based on what their peers perceive to be their sexual orientation, regardless of whether they identify as being LGBT. According to the most recent California Healthy Kids Survey, 12 percent of 7th graders and 10 percent of 9th graders reported being harassed based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation. ??

GSA Network reviewed the websites of every school district in California and found that only 34% post their Student Non-Discrimination Policy. Of those, only 84% include sexual orientation and only 4% include gender identity and gender expression. Furthermore, only 24% of school district websites in California provide information for students and parents on where and how to file a complaint.

The consequences of bullying and harassment can include falling grades, depression, and risk of suicide. LGBT youth are three times as likely to seriously consider suicide as heterosexual youth.

The bill is co-sponsored by a coalition of organizations advancing LGBT equality and justice, including Equality California, the ACLU's California Affiliates, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and Gay-Straight Alliance Network.

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The three California Affiliates of the **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)** are part of the nationwide, nonpartisan organization with more than 550,000 members dedicated to the defense and promotion of the guarantees of individual liberty secured by state and federal Constitutions and civil rights statutes.

www.ACLUNC.org [7]

Equality California is the largest statewide lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights advocacy organization in California. Over the past decade, Equality California has strategically moved California from a state with extremely limited legal protections for LGBT individuals to a state with some of the most comprehensive civil rights protections in the nation. Equality California has passed more than 70 pieces of legislation and continues to advance equality through legislative advocacy, electoral work, public education and community empowerment.

www.EQCA.org [8]

Gay-Straight Alliance Network (GSA Network) is a national youth leadership organization that empowers youth activists to fight homophobia and transphobia in schools by training student leaders and supporting student-led Gay-Straight Alliance clubs throughout the country. In California alone, we have brought GSA clubs to 56% of public high schools, impacting more than 1.1 million students at 850 schools. GSA Network's youth advocates have played a key role in changing laws and policies that impact youth at the local and state level. GSA Network is also the founder of the Make It Better Project, which aims to stop bullying and prevent suicide.

www.gsanetwork.org [9]

The National Center for Lesbian Rights is a national legal organization committed to advancing the human and civil rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community through litigation, public policy advocacy, and public education. www.NCLRrights.org [10]

<http://www.gsanetwork.org> [11]

Press Release

GSA Network

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Links

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