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GSA Network

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California Senate Passes Landmark LGBT Education Bill

??*Legislation sponsored by Equality California and Gay-Straight Alliance Network aims to stop discriminatory education and promote school safety*

*??*Sacramento – Today a bill that would require schools to fairly and accurately portray the historic contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in social science instruction passed the Senate in a 23-14 vote. The Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful (FAIR) Education Act (SB 48), authored by Senator Mark Leno (D-San Francisco), would also add sexual orientation and gender identity to the state's existing anti-discrimination protections that prohibit bias in school activities, instruction and instructional materials.

Studies have shown that inclusion of LGBT people in instructional materials is linked to greater student safety and lower rates of bullying. The bill is co-sponsored by Equality California and Gay-Straight Alliance Network.?

?The FAIR Education Act would bring classroom instruction into alignment with existing non-

discrimination laws in California and would add LGBT to the existing list of underrepresented cultural and ethnic groups, which are covered by current law related to inclusion in textbooks and other instructional materials in schools. By including fair and accurate information about LGBT people and history in instructional materials, SB 48 will improve student safety, reduce bullying, enrich the learning experiences of all students, and promote an atmosphere of safety and respect in California schools.??

“We thank the Senate for recognizing the need to educate students about the historic contributions of LGBT leaders to California and the struggle for LGBT equality,” said Jim Carroll, interim executive director of Equality California. “This legislation will ensure all students understand the diversity of our state and its history, and it will foster greater awareness, respect and safer schools for all students.”

“We're thrilled the Senate approved SB 48, recognizing that inclusion of LGBT Americans in instructional materials will teach all students to respect each other's differences, reduce bullying and increase safety for all students,” said Carolyn Laub, Executive Director of Gay-Straight Alliance Network. “Our LGBT youth members who lobbied and testified for this bill can feel proud knowing that they have helped California take a step closer to truly providing a fair and accurate education for all students.”

“As a gay young man, I struggled with accepting my identity for years. In school, I never learned that people like me had achieved great things like leading a civil rights movement. Instead, I had only learned stereotypes,” said Isaiah Baiseri, a senior at Glendora High School, who testified at a Senate committee hearing in support of SB 48. “I’m thankful the Senate passed SB 48 so that someday other students like me can learn our history.”

“Most textbooks don’t include any information about LGBT historical figures or the LGBT civil rights movement, which has great significance to both California and U.S. history,” said Senator Leno (D-San Francisco). “This selective censorship sends the wrong message to all young people, and especially to those who do not identify as straight. We can’t tell our youth that it’s OK to be yourself and expect them to treat their peers with dignity and respect while we deny them accurate information about the historical contributions of Americans who happened to be LGBT.”

The bill now heads to the Assembly rules committee.

Download the FAIR Education Act Fact Sheet [3].FAIR Education Act Fact Sheet

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Gay-Straight Alliance Network (GSA Network) is a 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 in California and throughout the country. Since GSA Network began in 1998, the number of GSA clubs in California schools has increased from 40 to 830, including more than 53% of the public high schools and a growing number of middle 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. www.gsanetwork.org [4]

Equality California (EQCA) 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 [5]
http://www.gsanetwork.org [4]
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