Published on *Gay-Straight Alliance Network* (http://www.gsanetwork.org)

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Jul. 14, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Legislation sponsored by Equality California and Gay-Straight Alliance Network aims to end LGBT history exclusion in education and to promote school safety

Sacramento - Governor Jerry Brown has signed a bill that will fairly and accurately portray the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights movement and the historic contributions of the diverse LGBT community in social science instruction. The Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful (FAIR) Education Act (SB 48), by including fair and accurate information about the rich and diverse history of LGBT people in instructional materials, will enrich the learning experiences of all students and promote an atmosphere of safety and respect in California schools. SB 48 was authored by Senator Mark Leno (D-San Francisco) and co-sponsored by Equality California and Gay-Straight Alliance Network.

Studies have shown that inclusion of LGBT people in instructional materials is linked to greater student safety and lower rates of bullying. In schools where the contributions of the LGBT community are included in educational instruction, bullying declined by over half and LGBT students were more likely to feel they have an opportunity to make positive contributions at school.

"Today marks a monumental victory for the LGBT civil rights movement as the contributions of diverse LGBT community will no longer be erased from history," said Equality California Executive Director Roland Palencia. "Thanks to the FAIR Education Act, California students, particularly LGBT youth, will find new hope and inspiration and experience a more welcoming

learning environment that will embrace them."

Palencia added, "For decades, LGBT leaders have worked tirelessly to improve the quality of life for all Californians. LGBT leaders were involved in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, the farm workers' movement, the women's movement, have built health and human services institutions that now serve millions of Californians, and have contributed to the economic development of our state. We are truly grateful for the courageous leadership of Senator Leno, the LGBT Caucus, allied lawmakers, our members, and the entire LGBT community for making history and for promoting safety in our schools as students learn about our rich legacy."

The FAIR Education Act will bring classroom instruction into alignment with existing non-discrimination laws in California and would add the LGBT community 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.

"I am awed and humbled to be part of this historic moment. Today, we've written the latest chapter in the LGBT civil rights movement -- one that will now be presented fairly and accurately in California schools," said Carolyn Laub, Executive Director of Gay-Straight Alliance Network. "By signing the FAIR Education Act and ending the exclusion of the LGBT community from instructional materials, Governor Brown has realized the hopes of youth who have been fighting for safe and inclusive schools, where all students learn about our history and gain respect for each other's differences as a result. This is a part of the American story that we can be proud to know all students will learn."

"Today we are making history in California by ensuring that our textbooks and instructional materials no longer exclude the contributions of LGBT Americans," said Senator Leno "Denying LGBT people their rightful place in history gives our young people an inaccurate and incomplete view of the world around them. I am pleased Governor Brown signed the FAIR Education Act and I thank him for recognizing that the LGBT community, its accomplishments and its ongoing efforts for first-class citizenship are important components of California's history."

"There is no room for discrimination of any kind in our classrooms, our communities or our state," said Dean E. Vogel, president of the California Teachers Association. "We believe that curricula should address the common values of the society, promote respect for diversity and cooperation, and prepare students to compete in, and cope with a complex and rapidly evolving society. SB 48 does that by helping to ensure that curricular materials include the contributions of persons with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans to the development of California and United States."

Among the diverse supporters of the FAIR Education Act include: Adolescent Health Working Group, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Anti-Defamation League, Arc and United Cerebral Palsy in California, Asian Americans for Civil Rights & Equality, Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Advocacy & Leadership, California Language Teachers Association, California Psychological Association, California Teachers Association, California Faith for Equality, Californians for Disability Rights, Inc., City of Oakland, City of West Hollywood, Disability Rights California, Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom, Los Angeles Unified School

District, Public Advocates, San Francisco Unified School District, Transgender Law Center, California Church IMPACT, Our Family Coalition, National Center for Lesbian Rights, Fresno County Democratic Central Committee, San Joaquin Valley Democratic Club, The Trevor Project, School for Integrated Academics & Technologies, and the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund.

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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

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, GSA Network has 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 operates the National Association of GSA Networks, which unites more than 30 statewide networks of GSA clubs throughout the country. GSA Network is also the founder of the Make It Better Project, which aims to stop bullying and prevent suicide.www.gsanetwork.org[1]

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