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Opponents of FAIR Education Act Fail to Qualify Referendum for 2012 Ballot

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(San Francisco) Today, anti-equality advocates announced that they have failed to collect the required number of signatures to place a referendum for the November 2012 ballot to overturn the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful (FAIR) Education Act.

The FAIR Education Act, authored by Senator Mark Leno (D-San Francisco) and sponsored by Equality California and GSA Network, was signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown earlier this year. It requires schools to integrate age-appropriate and factual information about historical roles of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, people with disabilities and people of color into existing social science instruction.

“The FAIR Education Act will simply ensure that California’s students learn an honest, accurate, and inclusive account of history, but opponents of equality have grossly distorted the intent and the effect of the FAIR Education act in their quest to secure signatures for this referendum. Today's victory shows that their lies cannot stand up to our truth,” said Roland Palencia, Equality California Executive Director and Interim Executive Committee Co-Chair of the coalition to protect the FAIR Education Act. “But we know that opponents of equality won't stop here. We remain vigilant, not only to make sure that people know the facts about the FAIR Education Act, but also to continue preparing for new attacks on the FAIR Education Act at the ballot box, in the legislature and in courts of law.”

“Now it's time to focus on implementing the FAIR Education Act and demonstrate to the public that our opponents’ lies are nothing more than smear tactics designed to censor the historical contributions of LGBT people, people with disabilities and people of color from social studies classes,” said Laura Valdez, Interim Executive Director of Gay-Straight Alliance Network and Co-Chair of the Interim Executive Committee of the coalition to protect the FAIR Education Act. “Already, we are working with school administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community

groups to ensure the fair and accurate portrayal of historically marginalized groups in schools, and we will continue to work to educate the public."

"Today's news is welcome and it comes as the Second Annual Disability History Week in full swing, a reminder that youth with disabilities are powerful voices for change and tolerance," said Teresa Favuzzi, Executive Director of the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers. "We look forward to getting to work to implement this important law and to ensure that disability history is included in a full, inclusive, study of our history."

Since July, FAIR Education Act supporters across the state have built a broad coalition to protect the law and educate the public that spans people of faith; labor organizations; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights groups; disability rights advocates; racial justice organizations and many others who care about equality. These organizations remain committed to strengthening the coalition and protecting this important law. For more information, please go to **www.FAIREducationAction.com.**[1]

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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]*

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 [6]

***The California Foundation for Independent Living Centers** is a statewide, non-profit trade organization made up of 25 Independent Living Centers. Through unified action, CFILC envisions civil rights for all people with disabilities. CFILC's mission is to support independent living centers in their local communities through advocating for systems change and promoting access and integration for people with disabilities.http://www.cfilc.org[7]*

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