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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Anti-Equality Advocates File Initiative to Eliminate LGBT People from FAIR Education Act

Sacramento ? Today, anti-equality advocates filed papers with the state to circulate petitions for an initiative on the November 2012 ballot asking voters to strip language that includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people from the landmark FAIR (Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, Respectful) Education Act. Specifically, the initiative would strike the sections of California educational code that require schools to include information about the historical contributions of LGBT people, along with other groups, in social studies courses and prohibit schools from adopting discriminatory materials that reflect adversely on LGBT people. This initiative attempt follows an unsuccessful effort earlier this year to place a referendum on the ballot to overturn the FAIR Education Act, which goes into effect January 1, 2012. The group has 150 days from the date the initiative petition is approved for circulation to collect more than 504,760 signatures to qualify the measure for the ballot. However, the initiative measure must qualify at least 131 days before the November general election.

?In the past few months, organizations across the state have been working tirelessly in coalition to ensure California schools value and protect equality for all Americans, including students and the figures they read about in history books,? said James Gilliam, Deputy Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California. ?This initiative seeks to distort the history taught in California schools and present students with a censored, inaccurate view of our nation, which our coalition will not let stand.?

?Regardless of these political maneuvers, we are already working with students, administrators, teachers, and parents to ensure that California schools are prepared to follow the FAIR Education Act on January 1st and present a full, fair and accurate picture of history,? said Laura Valdez, Interim Executive Director of Gay-Straight Alliance Network. ?Without honest and inclusive classrooms, we cannot expect schools to provide the safe learning environment that all students deserve.?

FAIR Education Act supporters across the state have built a broad coalition spanning people of faith; labor organizations; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights groups; disability rights advocates; racial justice organizations and many others who care about equality. These organizations remain committed to strengthening the coalition, implementing the FAIR Education Act, and ensuring that California classrooms are inclusive.

"The social movements, experiences and contributions of the Disability and LGBT communities are a significant part of California and our nation's history,? said Teresa Favuzzi, Executive Director of the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers. ?While there are people who would rather our stories not be told, we cannot pick and choose the pieces of history we teach ? all are essential if we are to provide the youth of California with a complete and truthful education.?

"Here they go again. At a time when California is facing real economic and social challenges, opponents of equality are manufacturing 'problems' to advance their extremist agenda--and they?re using our schools as the battleground," said Clarissa Filgioun, Equality California Board Chair. "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 dismantle it. We know that when Californians learn the facts about the FAIR Education Act they see these efforts for what they are--the same tired attacks and lies these groups have used for years to turn back the clock on LGBT equality."

The FAIR Education Act, authored by Senator Mark Leno (D-San Francisco) and sponsored by Equality California and Gay-Straight Alliance 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. For more information, please go to www.FAIREducationAction.com [5].

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http://www.gsanetwork.org [6]

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