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Bill Will Ensure the Success and Well-being of Transgender Students

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SACRAMENTO - Assemblymember Tom Ammiano has introduced the School Success and Opportunity Act, Assembly Bill 1266, co-authored by Senator Mark Leno and Senator Ricardo Lara. The bill will ensure that California public schools understand their responsibility for the success and well-being of all students, including transgender students, and will allow transgender students to fully participate in all school activities, programs, and facilities.

California law already prohibits discrimination in education, but transgender students are still unfairly excluded from physical education, athletic teams, and other school activities and facilities. This exclusion negatively impacts students? ability to succeed in school and graduate with their class. For example, physical education classes help students develop healthy fitness habits and teach values like teamwork and fair competition ? and count toward graduation as much as any other course.

?We have heard from scores of parents concerned that their children are at risk for dropping out of school merely because they are transgender,? said Transgender Law Center Executive Director Masen Davis. ?It breaks my heart to see our youth excluded from activities at school simply because of who they are. This bill is urgently needed to ensure that every student has a fair chance to fully participate and graduate.?

?Transgender students should have a fair chance at graduating. They shouldn?t be singled out and excluded,? said Joel Baum, a former middle school science teacher, principal and district administrator. ?Students I?ve worked with who have been excluded from appropriate school programs and facilities have encountered medical issues as well as humiliation, significantly impacting their educational experience.? Baum is currently the Director of Education and Training at Gender Spectrum.

The bill, AB 1266, would make it clear to school districts, teachers, parents and students that California?s nondiscrimination law requires public schools to respect a transgender student?s identity in all school programs, activities, and facilities.

The Los Angeles Unified School District, which is the second largest school district in the country and serves more than 670,000 students, successfully implemented a related policy to ensure that no one is left out.

?In addition to longstanding policies banning bullying, harassment, and discrimination, we have had specific policies banning discrimination based on gender since 2005. We have firsthand experience seeing the value that recognizing the rich diversity of our school communities has on enriching the lives of all students,? said Judy Chiasson, Program Coordinator for Human Relations, Diversity and Equity at the Los Angeles Unified School District.

The Massachusetts Department of Education recently issued guidelines requiring all Massachusetts public schools to ensure that transgender students are fully included in physical education, sports, and access to other programs and facilities.

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ACLU of California comprises the statewide work of the three California affiliates of the American Civil Liberties Union to protect and defend civil liberties.

Equality California (EQCA) is the largest statewide lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender advocacy organization in California. Over the past decade, Equality California has strategically moved California from a state with extremely limited legal protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people to a state with some of the most comprehensive protections in the nation. Equality California has partnered with legislators to successfully sponsor more than 85 pieces of pro-equality legislation. EQCA continues to advance equality through legislative advocacy, electoral work, public education and community empowerment.
www.EQCA.org [1]

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 over 900 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 37 statewide networks of GSA clubs throughout the country. www.gsanetwork.org [2]

Gender Spectrum provides resources, training and support to create gender sensitive and inclusive environments for all children and teens. www.genderspectrum.org [3]

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.NCLRights.org [4]

Transgender Law Center works to change law, policy, and attitudes so that all people can live

safely, authentically, and free from discrimination regardless of their gender identity or expression. www.TransgenderLawCenter.org [5]

Press Release
http://gsanetwork.org [6]

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Links:
[1] http://www.EQCA.org
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