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High School Student Files Complaint Against Fringe Anti-LGBT Group for Operating Illegally

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(Manteca, CA) Manteca high school student Ashton Lee and his mother, Catherine Lee, filed a complaint this week with the California Attorney General?s Office asking for an investigation into an anti-LGBT group that has been operating illegally and claiming to be a tax-exempt organization to receive donations, when in fact its tax-exempt status was revoked by the Internal Revenue Service months ago.

The Capitol Resource Institute (CRI) had its tax-exempt status revoked in February by the IRS after failing to provide required financial information for three consecutive years. It is also listed on the California Attorney General site as delinquent in required filings. Despite this, the group has continued to say they are tax exempt in order to solicit contributions to continue its work, including challenging California?s new School Success and Opportunity Act (Assembly Bill 1266), which ensures that transgender students have the same opportunities to be successful as their peers.

?It troubles us that this group, which is sending out emails asking for money to overturn a law, the School Success and Opportunity Act, that just makes sure students like me can participate in school, is doing so illegally,? said Ashton, 16. ?Our lives are directly harmed on a daily basis by the work they are doing to attack our rights and opportunities.?

Lee became involved with the School Success and Opportunity Act after taking part in the Gay-Straight Alliance Network?s annual Queer Youth Advocacy Day last April. In August, Lee delivered 5,700 petition signatures to CA Governor Jerry Brown urging him to sign the bill into law. On August 12, Brown signed the bill into law. Shortly after it was signed, CRI announced a signature-gathering effort to try to challenge the new law through a referendum. CRI has until November 10 to collect roughly 505,000 valid signatures.

"After years of failing to defeat other LGBT nondiscrimination protections, it is sad that these fringe groups are using their resources ? illegally ? to target vulnerable students," said John O?Connor, Executive Director of Equality California. "It is an inspiration to see that Ashton is not

so vulnerable and has taken great initiative to organize and take action with his heroically supportive mother."

?We are so proud to see Ashton, a young person who legally and honestly fought for the opportunity to succeed in school, stand up to these fringe groups who have lied to the public in their attempt to bully him and transgender students across the state,? said Carolyn Laub, Executive Director of Gay-Straight Alliance Network.

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Equality California (EQCA) is the largest statewide lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender advocacy organization in California. For more than a 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 protections in the nation. Equality California has partnered with legislators to successfully pass over 90 pieces of pro-equality legislation and 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]

Press Release
http://gsanetwork.org [3]

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Links:
[1] http://www.eqca.org
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[3] http://gsanetwork.org