

SB 52 Testimony

Hello, I'm Wren Fulner, a second year Masters of Social Work student at Pacific University, student therapist for the Bethel School District, and co-facilitator of the Alliance to Prevent Suicide's LGBTQ+ Advisory Group, as well as being a member of the queer community. I write to you today in support of SB 52, to formalize, fund, and, most importantly, implement the findings of the Oregon Department of Education's LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan. This plan is integral to successful suicide prevention work in Oregon, and to support the resilience of LGBTQ+ students, who, as evidenced by this plan in addition to research by national organization The Trevor Project, experience higher rates of bullying and suicidal ideation and attempts than their straight and cisgender peers.

I reviewed this plan as part of our Advisory Group's preparation of recommendations for the next Youth Suicide Intervention & Prevention Plan, and saw clear direction of the desires and needs of our LGBTQ+ youth: support from teachers and staff, including action and follow up when a student reports a harassment incident; relevant and inclusive curriculum that tells LGBTQ+ history and current events; access to gender neutral facilities; and a broader network of mental health supports. In addition, this plan demonstrates that while LGBTQ+ student supporting policies exist at multiple levels in our state, there is not widespread awareness of the policies nor a coordinated plan of outreach and implementation.

These are direct, actionable items that can be accomplished through political will of our Oregon legislators. The data has been collected and Oregon LGBTQ+ youth have spoken. Now it is up to you, our elected officials, to prioritize this work and direct funding to protect and support our students. Thank you for your consideration, and for the work you do to make our state a safe and affirming place for the LGBTQ+ community.