

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

I am writing to express support for Senate Bill 52, which would provide life-affirming student-success plans in our schools for at-risk LGBTQ+ students.

My transgender daughter Adi died by suicide in 2017, but I believe she would be alive today if an effective support plan had been in-place during her enrollment at Grant High School in Portland. Adi initially thrived in the summer of her transition. However, after her return to school, Adi experienced the bullying and marginalization that have been so well documented by the Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition and others.

After Adi's death, we met with school-district administration to discuss whether any protective measures might be implemented, including protocol for staff intervention when a student expresses suicidal ideation in coursework. In sorting through memorabilia, we learned of writing assignments in which Adi had expressed fear of self-harm and for which the teacher had failed to contact us or otherwise intervene. We found it difficult to accept that her writings went unaddressed but found it even more frustrating that the school administration showed no intention of considering improvements. In response, we collaborated with Basic Rights Oregon to pass "Adi's Act" in the 2019 legislative session, which required Oregon's public schools to implement suicide-prevention plans.

As I have consistently stated in public comments, I do not believe that the school suicide-prevention plans mandated by Adi's Act will be successful without cultural change in the schools. In directing the development of education plans for LGBTQ+ students, Senate Bill 52 addresses school culture through specific ODE-supported strategies to increase inclusivity, improve student belonging, reduce bullying, and improve attendance. I believe that several of these strategies – on their own – would have had life-saving impact on my daughter.

On behalf of my wife Chris and son Drew – and in memory of my daughter Adi – I appreciate your support for passage of Senate Bill 52.

Lon Staub

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