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February 26, 2021

Assemblymember Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: FY 2021-2022 LGBTQ+ EDUCATION BUDGET PROPOSAL

Dear Chair Ting,

California is home to hundreds of thousands of LGBTQ+ students in the state's school districts. Because youth spend a large portion of their waking hours at school, it is critical that schools provide a safe and supportive environment for all students, especially LGBTQ+ youth, who face disproportionately high rates of bullying, harassment, discrimination, and lack of acceptance — and, as a result, are more likely than their non-LGBTQ+ peers to miss school, see their academic performance suffer, drop out, encounter the juvenile justice system, and consider self-harm or suicide.

The future of our youth and our community is at stake. And it is incumbent upon all of us to take action.

The Landscape:

GLSEN's 2019 National School Climate Survey found that 52.4% of students reported that their teachers or other school staff made homophobic remarks, and 66.7% of students reported that their teachers or other school staff spoke negatively about students' gender expression. These remarks pose a risk of immediate harm to students' well-being. These statistics also suggest that students may be learning anti-LGBTQ+ language and perspectives from school personnel, perpetuating the societal cycle of anti-LGBTQ+ stigma that feeds the negative health, economic, and other disparities that LGBTQ+ people experience.

Beyond remarks, a staggering 86.3% of LGBTQ+ students experienced harassment or assault based on their sexual orientation, gender expression, or other personal characteristics. Over half (56.6%) of these LGBTQ+ students *never reported* the harassment or assault to school staff for a variety of reasons, including a fear of escalation, a belief that school staff would not effectively intervene, shame, the involvement of school staff in the harassment or assault, or other concerns. When students did report incidents, 60.5% of them said that staff did nothing.

The Impact:

GLSEN's national data suggests that these experiences can have a harmful effect on LGBTQ+ students' school performance. LGBTQ+ students who experienced higher levels of victimization or harassment tied to their sexual orientation missed school three times more often, had lower GPAs, were less likely to pursue post-secondary education, were more likely to be disciplined at school, had lower self-esteem, and had higher levels of depression. For LGBTQ+ youth who are also targeted because of their race, immigration status, zip code, religion or ability, the disparities are even greater.

The Need:

California faces an urgent need for professional development to increase the number of school staff who are equipped to intervene in, and effectively respond to, incidents of bullying or harassment and to increase the number of school staff available to support LGBTQ+ students. High-quality and comprehensive LGBTQ+ cultural competency training and professional development is also critical to ensure, for example, that inclusive anti-bullying policies not only exist but are properly implemented, that school staff will protect student privacy and refer to students by the correct names and gender pronouns at all times, that school facilities are safe and accessible for transgender or gender non-conforming students, that school functions provide affirming and welcoming spaces, and that school staff are fully prepared to identify and support students at risk of suicide. The funding we request is critical to ensuring students' overall health and well-being. A safe and supportive school environment certainly helps ensure that students can succeed while in school, but it also ensures that students complete their education and are equipped for economic success in adulthood. Many LGBTQ+ youth who experience homelessness are fleeing from family rejection or abuse and turn to teachers and other school employees to create a safe haven in which they can thrive – it is important that staff be prepared to respond when they do.

We respectfully request \$3,000,000 in one-time funding to support the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ students. Funds will promote the creation of an online training on schoolsite and community resources for the support of LGBTQ+ pupils and strategies to increase support for LGBTQ+ pupils and thereby improve overall school climate. The training will be designed for use by teachers and other certificated employees in schools operated by a school district or county office of education and charter schools.

FUNDING BREAKDOWN:

\$163,000 one-time for one Education Programs Consultant at the California Department of Education (the Department) to fulfill all of the following functions:

- oversee the development of an online LGBTQ+ cultural competency training curriculum and accompanying module
- facilitate the RFP processes described below
- work in partnership with the lead partner described below

\$160,000 one-time to an LGBTQ+ organization to serve as lead partner to the Department in the development of the training. This lead partner will be selected by the Department via an RFP process.

- Qualifications:
 - must be an LGBTQ+ organization
 - must have demonstrated expertise in improving school climate for LGBTQ+ youth and advancing policies to support LGBTQ+ youth in the state of California, preferably in rural, suburban, and urban communities
 - must have demonstrated experience in creating and conducting LGBTQ+ cultural competency training programs in rural, suburban, and urban communities with the goal of improving the institutions that serve LGBTQ+ communities
- Funds will cover staff time, overhead, and related costs to fulfill the following functions:
 - assist the Department in conducting outreach to prospective members of the advisory committee described below
 - assist the Department in selecting the outside contractors to comprise the advisory committee described below pursuant to an RFP process conducted by the Department
 - support the Department in convening the advisory committee throughout the creation of the training
 - advise and consult with the Department on the training content and delivery advise on selecting the educational, video, and other consultants who will create both the online training content and the platform

\$275,000 one-time for an advisory committee consisting of representatives from a range of LGBTQ+ organizations and other organizations that provide services to LGBTQ+ or at-risk youth and students.

- The advisory committee will be composed of representatives from up to 20 organizations, selected via an RFP process that will be conducted by the Department and supported by the lead partner. Each organization will receive \$10,000 to cover the cost of their participation, including staff time and

overhead. The remaining \$75,000 will be used to cover meeting expenses, such as site rentals, food, lodging, and travel costs for participants.

- These organizations must operate not-for-profit and demonstrate a proven track record of serving LGBTQ+ people or at-risk youth.
- The committee will advise on the development and content of the training to assure that the training is culturally competent, comprehensive, and meets the needs of LGBTQ+ students, families, and teachers.
- The committee will meet multiple times throughout the entire span of the development of the training.

\$1,802,000 one-time for the development of the online training's content, tailored for teachers and other certificated staff throughout the state of California, which must meet all of the following criteria:

- be engaging and interactive, requiring the sustained input and participation of the trainee
- be developed in partnership with consultants who are experts in media marketing, video communications, teacher and staff training, and youth education to ensure the training is sufficiently engaging and interactive
- be tailored to reach teachers and other certificated employees who may not have a background in LGBTQ+ cultural competency
- be crafted in consultation with the advisory committee described above consisting of experts in education, youth, students, and the LGBTQ+ community
- contain information on, at a minimum, the following topics:
 - the creation of safe and supportive learning environments for LGBTQ+ students, including those with multiple intersecting identities, for example those who are members of the LGBTQ+ community, members of communities of color, immigrants, and/or people living with HIV
 - identifying LGBTQ+ youth who are subject to, or may be at risk of, bullying and lack of acceptance at home or in their communities
 - the provision of targeted support services to LGBTQ+ youth, including counseling services
 - requirements regarding school antibullying and harassment policies and complaint procedures
 - requirements regarding suicide prevention policies and related procedures
 - requirements regarding policies relating to use of school facilities, including, but not limited to, bathrooms and locker rooms
 - requirements regarding policies and procedures to protect the privacy of LGBTQ+ pupils
 - the importance of identifying local community-based organizations that provide support to LGBTQ+ youth
 - the importance of identifying local physical and mental health providers with experience in treating and supporting LGBTQ+ youth
 - the formation of peer support or affinity clubs and organizations
 - the importance of school staff who have received antibias or other training aimed at supporting LGBTQ+ youth
 - health and other curriculum materials that are inclusive of, and relevant to, LGBTQ+ youth

\$600,000 one-time to develop an online platform for the training, which must meet all of the following criteria:

- be able to track trainee usage and participation for the purpose of compliance on both the local level and on an aggregate, statewide basis
- be able to assess trainee knowledge before and after training in order to measure outcomes
- be highly interactive, requiring the sustained input and participation of the trainee

Thank you for your consideration of this budget request.

Respectfully,



Evan Low
Assemblymember, 28th District