

**Testimony of the NYC Department of Education on Intro No. 1638  
Before the NYC Council Committee on Education**

**September 14, 2017**

Good Afternoon Chair Dromm and Members of the Education Committee. I am Jaye Murray, Executive Director of the New York City Department of Education's (DOE) Office of Counseling Support Programs. I am joined by Jared Fox, the DOE's LGBT Community Liaison. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss Intro No 1638, which would require DOE to report information on Gender Sexuality Alliances (GSAs).

Before I go further, I want to thank Chair Dromm and the City Council for your leadership and partnership on this important issue. Through your strong voice, we have an LGBT Community Liaison and a Gender Equity Coordinator, and, this year we will be able to support additional LGBT programming and initiatives. We anticipate being able to extend our reach across schools in a number of areas, including supporting student clubs like GSAs.

The DOE works to ensure that all of our schools maintain a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment, including for our LGBT students, families, and staff. GSAs are one of a broad range of interventions and supports available to LGBT students, families, and staff. These resources are also important for allies, children of LGBT parents, and those who are coming to understand LGBT identity. We know that many times, even in schools where GSAs are present, they are not the only pillar of support. We encourage not only the creation of GSAs and the inclusion of LGBT curriculum into classrooms, but also training for staff members on terminology and resources for LGBT students. Creating environments that affirm LGBT students is a multi-pronged approach, and we recognize GSAs as one element of this approach.

We are grateful to the Council for supporting this holistic vision through funding programs such as the Lambda Literary Writers in Schools Program, which has been a successful means of incorporating LGBT content into classrooms and GSAs. We also saw during our June 2017 LGBT Inclusive Curriculum conference that many attendees were both teachers and GSA advisors.

We are proud that many of our efforts have been ahead of their time, thus paving the way for inclusion and affirmation of LGBT identity in NYC and across the country. Our Transgender Student Guidelines, initially launched in March 2014, are one such example. In March 2017, we issued updated Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Student Guidelines. These guidelines, were expanded to provide more comprehensive and specific guidance and to reflect best practices.

Following the release of these updated guidelines, in May 2017, we announced that all students will have access to single stall student restrooms, and work has already begun to convert these restrooms. Students and families in schools where the change has occurred have applauded the effort, and we will continue to make these changes until we reach all schools.

Our work to support LGBT students and staff is supported by several community partners through our LGBT Advisory Council. The council was established in March 2014, and, since its creation, has expanded to include 34 participating organizations that meet regularly to offer support and resources to LGBT students, families, and staff. It is important that our work is done in partnership with communities.

In times of uncertainty, the DOE has doubled down our efforts to affirm LGBT students, families, and staff. We have shown this commitment publicly through our annual Pride Celebration at Tweed and through our participation in borough-based Pride events. Our Queens Pride contingent was the recipient of the “Simply the Best” award, and, in the Heritage of Pride march, our float and marching contingent exceeded 200 people. We were happy to be joined by Council Member Dromm during both of these marches—thank you, again, for your continued support.

Our efforts to support LGBT identity are not only provided by the Office of Counseling Support Programs. The Office of School Wellness Programs (OSWP), for instance, provides trainings on how to teach comprehensive health education inclusive of LGBT individuals. OSWP also hosts a webinar where, upon completion, school staff can wear “Out for Safe School” badges as symbols to students of a safe and supportive environment for LGBT students.

Last but not least, the Office of Safety and Youth Development’s Respect for All (RFA) initiatives focus on school climate and culture. In addition to the required training for RFA liaisons, over 1,000 DOE staff completed RFA Kognito online training on supporting LGBT students. We are in the process of developing three more Kognito online training simulations, one of which specifically targets LGBT issues. An entire day of our annual RFA Week in February will be focused on LGBT themes.

We want to thank the City Council for being our partner in this work. We know that there is more work to be done. To that end, we are continuing to expand services and supports to school leaders, teachers, other staff, and students, and are increasing the citywide focus on LGBT inclusive curriculum. Again, your commitment and support for all NYC students and the LGBT youth of our City is both inspiring and critical to the work we have been doing and will continue to do with your partnership.

I would now like to turn to Jared Fox, who will update the Committee on his work with GSAs. We will then be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Testimony of Jared Fox, LGBT Community Liaison

Our work in supporting GSAs is personal for me. I was 14 years old when I started the process to create the first GSA in my home town of Cleveland, Ohio. GSAs create a space for LGBT and allied students to socialize, support one another, and advocate for inclusive practices in their schools. We know that LGBT students are vulnerable and face unique challenges, and I saw firsthand how other students and staff were impacted by having a GSA at my school.

We have traditionally seen these clubs at the high school level, but are seeing an increasing number of clubs in middle school settings and even one elementary school. An informal count of GSAs through principals and RFA Liaisons indicated about 200 GSAs around the City, with over 150 in high schools. We have even started a GSA for Central office staff. The NYC Schools Pride Employee Resource Group brings together LGBT and allied staff from across all five boroughs for social and educational events.

An expansion of GSAs in District 2 middle schools stems from the advocacy of students from East Side Middle School. This amazing group of young people recognized the importance of GSAs and the impact it had on their school. Together with Superintendent Bonnie Laboy and Principal David Getz, they helped middle schools in their district see the benefits of having GSAs. These students have also inspired the proposed legislation we are considering and we commend them for their advocacy on behalf of all students.

DOE supports the creation of these clubs in schools, and our work to support student clubs of all types is supported by Chancellor's Regulation A-601. Consistent with the requirements of the federal Equal Access Act of 1984, this regulation provides that all student clubs and organizations that are similarly situated must be treated equally. In addition, they must be student initiated and open to all students, have a purpose that is aligned to the school's educational goals, have a pedagogical employee as a faculty advisor, and be approved by the student government and principal.

While the regulation prohibits DOE from mandating that schools create a GSA or any other student club, the DOE supports the creation of GSAs in schools where students initiate them. I have been able to provide personalized support to schools that: want to start GSAs; have questions in relation to them; and want staff education on LGBT topics. Research by the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN) has shown that the presence of a GSA has a positive influence on climate and culture in a school, with students reporting lower incidences of bullying and harassment on the basis of sexual orientation in these schools. GLSEN even celebrated one of our GSAs, the Academy for Young Writers in East New York, as their 2016 national GSA of the Year.

We also have heard powerful testimonies to our work from students who specifically sought to apply to a high school that had a GSA. We are very happy that School Finder now allows students participating in the high school admissions process to search for terms such as LGBT or GSA when researching schools. For example, a student looking for a high school in Brooklyn with a GSA might pop "LGBT" and "Brooklyn" into the School Finder and find Leon Goldstein High School for the Sciences in Sheepshead Bay. This year we will offer guidance to schools on how to list their GSA so that students interested in having this opportunity in high school can search with clarity.

We are also excited about our plans to support GSAs through the creation of:

- An LGBT events calendar complete with LGBT resources, a list of partner community-based organizations and FAQ's about how to start a GSA;

- A GSA starter kit that has materials such as posters, buttons, and literature to help newly formed GSA's kick off their programming;
- An expansion of the annual GSA Summit. For the past two years, the Office of School Wellness Programs has held a GSA Summit for 26 schools as part of their federal grant. Because of the Council's support, we can expand this GSA Summit to any school that would like to attend with workshops for faculty advisors and workshops tailored specifically for students.

In addition, this school year we will heighten efforts to message to Field Support Centers, administrators, superintendents, and school-based staff the benefits of sponsoring clubs that represent student diversity and interest, including GSAs.

I will now turn to the proposed legislation.

Intro No. 1638 requires the DOE to report information on GSAs in schools. Specifically, the bill would require the DOE to report on, among other reporting requirements: whether a school has a GSA; the number of meetings held by the GSA; the number of members; whether teachers or parents are involved; and the number of teachers that have received training related to GSAs. While we support the goal of the proposed legislation to ensure that students, families, members of a school community, and other stakeholders have information regarding whether a school has a GSA, we have some concerns regarding the scope of the reporting requirements. We do not currently track detailed information such as the bill proposes about any student club or alliance, and we are reluctant to single out a specific club for such detailed information. In addition, we do not have an existing mechanism to capture detailed, school-level information on GSAs or any other student club. It is challenging to impose another reporting requirement on school principals as they already devote considerable time to meeting federal, State, City, and DOE reporting requirements.

We believe maintaining information on whether schools have a GSA is important for school communities and DOE, and we look forward to working with the Council to narrow the scope of the proposed legislation to meet the goals of providing useful information without burdening schools with added data collection.

Thank you again for the leadership and financial commitment that the City Council provides. Much of what we do would be a greater challenge—and in some instances, would not be possible at all—without your support.



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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

**Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President  
Testimony for the Committee of Education  
September 15<sup>th</sup> 2017**

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I am Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President. Thank you to Chair Dromm for this opportunity to testify on proposed Intro 1638 and Reso 1442. Intro 1638 would require the Department of Education (DOE) to report on gay, straight, or gender sexuality alliance organizations (GSA) in our public schools and detail the institutional supports provided to GSA's in schools. Reso 1442 calls on the DOE to maintain a functional GSA in all middle and high schools "in order to support and protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning (LGBTQ), and other vulnerable students. I fully support both Intro 1638 and Reso 1442.

As a city that must educate over 1 million students we have a responsibility to build and implement curricula and afterschool activities that are culturally responsive and represent our students' social, cultural and sexual identities. Gathering information on the current landscape of GSA's in public schools is a necessary first step in working to create welcoming and positive school culture.

According to a recent study by the Human Rights Watch, "*Like Walking Through a Hailstorm*": *Discrimination Against LGBT Youth in US Schools* LGBTQ identifying students across the country described bullying as a prevalent issue. Students also relayed that they felt unsure about who to turn to for support. It is my hope that as we get a better sense of which schools currently have GSA's, we can work directly with schools to develop support networks to ensure our LGBTQ students feel affirmed, included and safe.

It is also imperative to acknowledge the Manhattan Leadership Council's role in making these bills a reality. Now more than ever, we need to be supporting our students' voices and creating pathways for our young people to get involved in the political process. These middle school students, under the leadership of Superintendent Bonnie Laboy, Principal David Getz, and school leaders in Community School District 2, have shown elected officials what is possible when we center our young people's experiences and hopes for the future and work to make them a reality. All students in New York City would benefit from a program like the Manhattan Leadership Council, where school principals are equipping students with the necessary knowledge and skills to become active and engaged leaders in the democratic process.

Clay, Celic, Katerina, Anaya and Neal, I thank you for your testimony today - and to the rest of the Manhattan Leadership Council, I congratulate you on your efforts and I look forward to the working with you on the actualization of your efforts.

Thank you.



Testimony of the  
United Federation of Teachers

By Janella Hinds, Vice President for Academic High Schools, and Anthony Harmon,  
Director of Community and Parent Outreach

Before the City Council Committee on Education  
Regarding Reporting from the Department of Education on Gender and Sexuality Alliances  
September 14, 2017

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. The United Federation of Teachers, and its 200,000 members who serve children of all genders and sexual orientations, would like to thank the Committee on Education's Chairman Danny Dromm for holding this hearing.

Childhood is often a difficult time in the lives of LGBTQ people. They grow up in a society that assumes children are cisgender and heterosexual by default. LGBTQ children discover — often at an early age — that they're different from the stereotypes and expectations they encounter everywhere from movies and television to their own families. That alone would be a challenge for any child but, sadly, it's only the beginning. Many LGBTQ children cannot even rely on their own parents for understanding, with disproportionate numbers facing verbal and physical abuse or abandonment.

All too often, school presents LGBTQ students with more challenges. The majorities of New York's LGBTQ students are bullied or physically assaulted because of their identities, according to a report from the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network. Black gay males and LGBTQ students with disabilities often find themselves at an even greater risk. These factors leave these students more vulnerable to feelings of isolation and depression, fights, substance abuse, truancy and dropping out. Tragically, the risk of suicide among the LGBTQ population is also much higher than other students.

The UFT — including our many LGBTQ members — is committed to the safety and civil rights of LGBTQ students and teachers. We're proud to have worked with the Department of Education, Councilmember Dromm, and many other members of this council, past and present, to make New York City's schools a safer space for LGBTQ students. Curriculums and classroom discussions now focus on building respect, inclusiveness, and understanding among students. Outside organizations — including the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network — regularly provide a wealth of supports and materials to schools.

Our work includes training thousands of UFT members in the Dignity For All Students Act around the specific needs of transgender and gender-nonconforming students. Educators who participate in these trainings explore everything from how to be a visible and vocal ally to the correct choice of pronouns to use when addressing a transgender student.

What's more, our Positive Learning Collaborative, a joint initiative with the DOE, provides teachers and staff with intensive training to help students deal with feelings of frustration, anger, rejection and depression. And our BRAVE anti-bullying program includes a student and parent hotline, parent workshops and conferences — all with the expressed goal of responding to and preventing bullying, including how to talk to children about bullying and how to support affected children.

At the Earth School, an elementary school in the East Village, teachers help students learn about different rights movements — including LGBTQ rights — through an inquiry-based approach. Students work in groups to research and examine the history, major events and key figures in the different movements. Then they connect what they've learned to overarching themes of solidarity and consciousness-raising. They present their understandings through a group project, one that entails education, outreach and empowerment, as well as an individual project on a specific area of their choosing.

At Harvey Milk High School, the country's very first public high school dedicated to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning students, it's the students who are leading by example. Each month, a group of students and educators travel to middle schools, high schools, and colleges across the city to present their unique LGBTQ+ Diversity Panel to other students. They share their inspirational stories to packed auditoriums, relating their experiences on how they identify, how they came out to their friends and family, and how they work through being bullied. This is part of a larger mission of raising gender awareness and educating other students and teachers about identity.

Critically, teachers work with students to create Gender and Sexuality Alliances and Gay Straight Alliances — both called GSAs — such as the one created at Staten Island's New Dorp High School by two teachers and a paraprofessional. The club went from a few students a decade ago to about 30 regular attendees. They collaborate with the Pride Center of Staten Island to bring activities to the school, like an annual LGBTQ prom, and they help organize the school's Day of Silence — a national event bringing attention to anti-LGBTQ bullying and harassment in schools.

It's difficult to overstate the importance of GSAs like these. Providing LGBTQ students a space to come together and share their experiences, affirm each other, explore their identities and learn about their history is absolutely vital to their education, mental health and safety. GSAs help create a refuge for LGBTQ students from pervasive hostility, provide them a necessary emotional support and empower them to assert their rights and needs.

GSAs also build bridges between LGBTQ and straight and cisgender students, helping them to understand one another and serve as a resource to entire school communities.

We must be diligent in making the whole school a safe place for its LGBTQ students. One way we can do that is by doing all we can to encourage the formation of GSAs in our schools. That's why it's so important that the Department of Education report which schools have these groups and whether the city supports them financially. As teachers, we often say that knowledge is power and this knowledge will empower us to identify which schools and students still need GSAs.

Going forward, the UFT's Pride Committee will be a major vehicle to bring about more positive change for LGBTQ students and teachers. Though recently dormant, the committee has a notable history: At the height of the AIDS crisis, it established a hotline which provided hundreds of our members with counseling and other assistance. The Pride Committee was rekindled in the wake of the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida, in 2016. That tragedy — the deadliest mass shooting by a single shooter and the deadliest act of violence against LGBTQ people in modern United States history — galvanized our members and redoubled our resolve to fight for the LGBTQ community inside and outside our schools.

We are grateful that the Council and this committee are working to support LGBTQ students and encourage GSAs in our schools, and we look forward to working with you on this issue in the months ahead.



**FOR THE RECORD**

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**Resolution #110**  
**To Support the Development and Expansion of Gender Sexuality**  
**Alliances in New York City Middle Schools**

Co-Sponsors: Robin Broshi, Eric Goldberg, Shino Tanikawa

**WHEREAS**, the Manhattan Student Leadership Council (MSLC) is a student group convened by District 2 Superintendent Bonnie Laboy and composed of a student representative from each District 2 Middle School;

**WHEREAS**, the MSLC's mission is to improve New York City and its schools through action and the MSLC has identified support of LGBTQ students as a primary focus;

**WHEREAS**, LGBTQ bullying is also the second most prevalent type of bullying in schools and LGBTQ students have a greater risk of depression and violence compared to their straight and cisgender peers;

**WHEREAS**, according to GLSEN's (an advocacy group for K-12 LGBTQ students) 2013 National School Climate Survey: "Seventy-four percent [of LGBTQ students] were verbally harassed in the past year because of their sexual orientation and 55 percent because of their gender expression" and 30 percent missed at least one day of school in the prior month due to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable;

**WHEREAS**, Gender Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) are student-run organizations which seek to establish a strong school community of LGBTQ students and their allies;

**WHEREAS**, GSAs provide support to LGBTQ students in need, inform non-LGBTQ students about issues regarding gender and sexuality, provide a safe place for all students to discuss issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity, and work to end homophobia and transphobia;

11-20-2017  
**WHEREAS**, every Middle School in District 2 through the support and advocacy of Superintendent Laboy and the MSLC has and or is currently establishing a GSA;

**WHEREAS**, GLSEN's 2015 National School Climate Survey found that in schools with a GSA, there was at least a 10 percent decrease in students who felt unsafe about their sexual orientation and/or gender expression and a significant decrease in students who skipped school because they felt unsafe about their sexuality;

**WHEREAS**, many middle schools across New York City do not have a GSA;

**WHEREAS**, the MSLC for the past two years has actively campaigned for the widespread adoption of GSAs in middle schools across NYC;

**WHEREAS**, the MSLC in concert with Councilmember Ben Kallos drafted and introduced two pieces of legislation for consideration by the New York City Council;

**WHEREAS**, Res 1638-2017 requires the city to gather data on the implementation of GSAs, as well as the enforcement of the Dignity For All Students act, which requires schools to collect and report incidents of discrimination and harassment;

**WHEREAS**, Res 1442-2017 encourages all New York City Middle Schools and High Schools to create, maintain and support a GSA;

**WHEREAS**, the CECD2 recognizes the outstanding work of the MSLC and Superintendent Laboy to empower District 2 students to bring this important issue to the community;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, the CECD2 strongly urges the New York City Council to pass Res 1442-2017 calling upon the New York City Department of Education to create and maintain a functional Gender-Sexuality Alliance (GSA) in all middle schools in order to support and protect LGBTQ and other vulnerable students;

**THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, the CECD2 strongly urges the New York City Council to pass Res 1638-2017 calling upon the New York City Department of Education to report on the implementation of GSAs and report on incidents of discrimination and harassment of LGBTQ students;

**THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, the CECD2 strongly urges the New York City Department of Education to create and maintain a functional Gender-Sexuality Alliance (GSA) in all Middle Schools and High Schools in order to support and protect LGBTQ and other vulnerable students.

**THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, the CECD2 strongly urges the New York City Department of Education to report on the implementation of GSAs and report on incidents of discrimination and harassment of LGBTQ students;

**Adopted and approved by CECD2 on June 14, 2017.**

**Testimony of Ananya Roy**  
**New York City Council: Committee on Education**

Good afternoon, Chairman Dromm and Committee Members. My name is Ananya Roy and I am a sophomore at the Bronx High School of Science. I also identify as queer. Today, I would like to share how being queer and being a part of the GSA at school has shaped my experience in school and at home.

Prior to Bronx Science, I went to school at East Side Middle School. In seventh grade, I figured out that I liked girls alongside boys. Suddenly, I had all these questions about my identity without anyone to talk to about it. I had known from sixth grade that our school had a functioning GSA, but I saw no point in attending since I didn't see myself as part of the community or even think about LGBTQ+ issues. So, I attended a couple of GSA sessions to see what I was getting myself into, and I fell in love with it. My GSA advisor, Alejandro Forigua, ran sessions that combined sharing personal experiences along with educating us about the LGBTQ+ community.

As a queer desi person, our situation can be especially debilitating with homophobia being extremely prevalent in our communities. I recall this one particular moment where my dad insisted that gay people were mentally ill and needed treatment. There are countless times where my uncle has been disgusted with his classmate because his classmate is gay, and my uncle was angry because he had been touched by this classmate. Although it was painful, sharing all of that with the GSA, it helped me not internalize the homophobia, and it helped me self-validate my sexuality. GSA was the one place where I felt safe and comfortable because I knew that I would never be able to come out to my parents without facing disastrous consequences. Without the support that I found in GSA, I know that my life would have spiraled downward to a much darker place, a place that too many people in my situation have found themselves. GSA also steered me from letting the subtle homophobia of my classmates get to me, such as when some girls in PE would almost recoil if I made any contact with them. I heard the snickers my classmates made behind my back because I spoke so openly about my queerness.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak about my personal experiences and I hope that you will see how critical a GSA has been, both in terms of creating a safe place for LGBTQ+ students and validating our identities even when our friends, classmates, and families may not.

Good afternoon, Chairman Dromm, Committee Members, and all that came to listen to us today. My name is Valerie Franchitti, I am an 8th grade student at East Side Middle School, and a proud member of my school's GSA. I am here in front of you today to tell you about my experience over the past three years in this club.

I first joined our GSA in the sixth grade. The sixth grade was a difficult year for me. I was eleven years old, in a new school; I didn't know where I fit in. I was overwhelmingly nervous and uncomfortable. The whole experience was generally unpleasant, but the GSA was always a place I could find comfort in, especially in such a stressful year. I remember my first GSA meeting. I met a girl in my school's cafeteria, she told me about the club and told me that I should show up. She described the GSA as such a wonderful community, and I thought to myself "Why not?". So, the following Thursday I decided to go. I vividly remember walking up the four flights of stairs, each flight my heartbeat getting faster and faster.

When I finally reached the third floor, it felt like my heart just might jump out of my chest. I didn't know what to expect - everything was so foreign. I finally walked into the classroom, and this wave of relief crashed over me as I saw a group of smiling, happy faces looking up at me. Someone pulled up a chair for me, people introduced themselves and included me in the conversation. The whole time, even though I didn't know anyone to well yet, it felt as if I had stumbled upon a family. That's what the GSA turned into for me. It's a type of family.

This is now my third year in the GSA, and i've grown tremendously during this time. The GSA provided me with a stable platform, a helpful community so I had the ability to figure out a lot of things. Things that I don't think I could've figured out without the GSA there. There's something special about having a place to go. Somewhere where you can focus on something besides life's issues, somewhere you can go if you feel out of place. There's something about having a community there. Somewhere

where, no matter who you are, you feel part of the family. That's, for me, the main goal of the GSA. To accept anyone who walks in through the door and give them a place to be. Give them a family. This type of community is so difficult to find in such a hostile world.

I was lucky enough to find people who understood what I was going through. It's lonely. Trying to figure yourself out. Coming to terms with things about yourself that you may hate, or detest. I had people to help me through that and still, I felt so isolated by all of these questions in my mind. I can't imagine what it must be like to not have a shoulder to lean on, to be truly alone in these questions. That type of solitude would drive me insane. Yet, there are people out there, in this very city, that deal with that every day. It hurts me to think about how painful that must be. I hope that one day, we can make it so that if people need a community, if people need a helping hand or listening ear they can find one as easily as I did.

Good afternoon, Chairman Dromm and Committee Members. My name is Benjamin Zekauskas and I am a 8th grade student at the East Side Middle School.

I came here because I want to tell you about my experience in the GSA. It is a really nice and safe place where you can be yourself. Where kids can come out if they are comfortable doing so without feeling attacked physically or emotionally. We meet every Wednesday during lunch, and you can get to know many friendly people; students that might want to create change, and will be inclusive to anyone who wants to help.

I started at ESMS a year late, in seventh grade. In my former school, there was a lot of discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community, and many kids would use the word "gay" as an insult. Before coming to ESMS, I had no idea what a GSA was.

I first joined the GSA in November 2016 when my Spanish teacher, who runs the GSA, worked on a school wide event with the GSA members. I asked him about it and he said it was called Ally Week. This is a week to celebrate LGBTQ+ Pride and show our support for diversity.

I decided to reach out to Sr. Forigua, my Spanish teacher, and ask him what motivated him to start a GSA, not completely knowing what it was. He told me that as a kid he grew up in an environment that wasn't accepting towards him for being gay. He said that now being a teacher it was really important for him to make sure his students never felt that way. He said that I should join the GSA and would learn all about it there.

I first started attending the GSA meetings because I didn't have much to do during lunchtime. Then I realized how important this space was for our school. Students need a place where they can freely express themselves around people they can trust. If every middle and high school had that, students would feel a lot safer.

Before joining the GSA, lunch wasn't all that fun, and I didn't have much to do. I love the GSA because it spices up my lunch. For example, I have worked on big projects knowing that I was helping people out. Also, I get to do the things I like to do, such as practicing my Spanish, which I REALLY REALLY enjoy. One of our most successful events is when we support the AIDS Walk New York. Last year we were able to fundraise more than \$9,000 to the cause. All students had the opportunity to volunteer and work towards this goal.

In the GSA, I have the opportunity to help out the community. This work is extremely important for students in need because they might need our help and not be as fortunate as we are, so it's our job to help them. The GSA can also teach students that everyone should be treated with respect, because we are all humans. Overall, a GSA in every middle and high school can make a big difference.

Thank you.



Good afternoon, Chairman Dromm and Committee Members. My name is Alejandro Forigua, I am the 8th Grade Spanish teacher and the GSA Advisor at M114 - East Side Middle School.

It is with great pride that I come before you today. Five years ago, during my first year of teaching, I started a GSA in our school. During one of my classes while working on a likes and dislikes project, a student wrote: "Me gustan las chicas y los chicos". That is Spanish for: "I like boys and girls". To protect his privacy, I'll refer to him as John. John had been struggling to find his place in our school. I remember both teachers and administrators expressing their concern for his well being. He wasn't shy about expressing feelings of anger, sadness and frustration about school, and his life at home. At school, we tried to come up with plans to support him and his family, but we still couldn't get through to him. After seeing what he wrote in my class, I set up a meeting with my Principal and suggested we started a GSA. He jumped at the idea with excitement and offered his full support.

I made an announcement asking my classes for volunteers to start this project. To my surprise, John volunteered to be one of them. We printed posters, worked on a logo to represent us; stopped by classes to invite students to join; and went to other schools to get guidance on starting a GSA. Before our first meeting, we were both nervous and excited.

We had a great turn out. There were twenty students, and a few teachers stopped by to show their support. The kids had a great time. A few of them were very eager to ask questions, and start conversations regarding gender identity and sexual orientation. Some others seemed to already have experience with these topics, since one 7th grader said at the beginning of the meeting "I think we should share our preferred pronouns as we introduce ourselves!"

By the end of the meeting we all felt very accomplished; especially John. As the weeks went by, John's change was noticeable. He started showing a lot of interest in the GSA meetings and activities, taking on a leadership role and helping out as much as possible.

I should tell you that at the time John identified as a girl.

In one of our meetings he came out as a lesbian, and by the end of the year he asked us to refer to him as a boy.

Having a GSA allowed him to question his identity in a safe and supportive environment, where he was able to understand his own self.

I have witnessed many success stories like this one over the past five years that fill me with pride and joy. Last year a student returned after graduating to express his gratitude to me and the GSA members. Even though he never came to the meetings, he was happy the club existed. He vividly remembered Ally Week: a GSA event to encourage everyone to come out as allies of the LGBTQ+ community. During that week we stopped by every classroom asking for volunteers to take their picture holding a sign with a message of allyship. The response was overwhelming. The majority of kids in every class wanted to be part of this event. We displayed posters of their pictures and messages throughout the school, and they stayed up there the whole year. In the words of parents, teachers and students, this was an event that allowed everyone to be included, and promoted a welcoming environment for all. And in the words of this student, it gave him the courage to come out.

When I talk to other adults about the GSA, they always ask me: "can you imagine if we had had that growing up?" As a gay kid growing up in Colombia, in an all male military school, I can tell you it would have been much less painful. But to see the effort, commitment and passion with which these students are working to make sure every

child feels safe at school, gives me hope that my students will have a much better experience than previous generations.

So... What is it about a GSA that has this great impact in schools? In my experience, it allows students to be part of a good cause, of something big. We learn to welcome and appreciate each other's uniqueness. We help those in need. We make new friends. We find ourselves.

Thank you.

City Council Members and Staff,

In the past, members of the LGBTQ+ community were shamed and closeted for their sexual orientation. People that were LGBTQ+ were ostracized by laws created by our “all-accepting” country. Today, we are striving to be a society where we celebrate our differences and understand that we cannot control the way that others think and feel, and that is a good thing. Regardless of where you live, there are students that are afraid to be themselves because of the disapproval of their families and communities or simply fear. Every student hopes to go to a school where there will be an environment that welcomes them and makes them feel safe. In order for students to have this sense of security it is essential to create a place where any student regardless of their race, gender, sex, religion, and sexual orientation can go and feel safe.

Throughout my time in the Manhattan Leadership Council we strived to create change in schools around the topic of acceptance. As much as we may try, it is inevitable that there will always be some person that does not feel good about themselves, or has a hard time at home and expresses that frustration through bullying others. Complete, absolute acceptance is a goal that we may never achieve. A start would be to create a Gender and Sexuality Alliance, also known as a GSA. This is what we need in middle and high schools in New York City in order to create a safe space for LGBTQ+ students.

To improve this situation, it is essential to acknowledge the problem. And this problem is quite serious for many of our LGBTQ+ students. According to the “GLSEN 2015 National School Climate Survey,” LGBTQ students have a high rate of being harassed or assaulted for various identity-based issues including sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender. These three issues had the highest rate of harassment and assault, which further shows how necessary it is to have a safe space for LGBTQ students to go to and know they are free from discrimination. The survey also revealed, LGBTQ students heard anti-LGBT remarks in their schools. It is important to both protect vulnerable students and educate all students on appropriate uses of words and general inclusive education. The study states, “The majority of LGBTQ students in New York regularly heard anti-LGBT remarks” and “Most LGBTQ students in New York had been victimized at school.” GSAs will not stop all bullying and harassment in all New York City schools. But anyone that has been bullied knows that you need a place or a person that you can feel safe with.

A GSA is where allies and LGBTQ+ students can gather to share stories and work on joint projects. It is a safe space and a welcoming environment where any student can flourish without being worried of being made fun of, harassed or assaulted. It states in the “GLSEN 2015 National School Climate Survey” that, “Findings... demonstrate that New York schools were not safe for most lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) secondary school students.” This is something that desperately needs to change, and GSA’s can help us move that change forward. We cannot send children to school knowing that they do not feel safe. This change needs to happen as soon as possible, and this begins with encouraging schools to create a Gender and Sexuality Alliance in every middle and high school in New York City.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Katerina Corr

Before I begin, I'd just like to thank you all for allowing me to testify before you today. My name is Clay Seliga, and I am here on behalf of the Manhattan Student Leadership Council. As you all know, we are a student group devoted to improving our city and our schools through action. In particular, for the past two years we have campaigned for the widespread adoption of Gender Sexuality Alliances in public middle schools. Gender-Sexuality Alliances are student organizations meant to establish a strong school community of LGBT students and their allies. These GSAs provide support to LGBT students in need, inform non-LGBT students about issues regarding gender and sexuality, and begin important and profound discussions about the world we live in.

Now, I would like to share some statistics with you all.

Reliable estimates indicate that between 4 and 10% of the population is gay, which means in a public school system of more than one million, like ours here in New York City, there are at least 40,000 to 100,000 gay students. A study by the Student Rights group GLSEN found that in schools with a GSA, there was an over 10 percent decrease in students who felt unsafe about their sexual orientation and/or gender expression. This study also showed a significant decrease in students who skipped school because they felt unsafe about their sexuality. LGBT bullying is also the second most common type of bullying in schools, and still remains criminally unaddressed in our school system's discipline policies. LGBT students also have a greater risk of depression and many types of violence compared to their straight and cisgender peers. Our GSAs aim to fix many of these deeply rooted problems that affect LGBT students every day.

Currently, thanks to our efforts and the help of Superintendent Laboy and Principal Getz, every school in District Two is required to have a GSA. However, we at the Manhattan Student Leadership Council do not want to stop there. That is why we are here today. We have met with activist organizations such as GLSEN, received signatures from many UFT Chapter Chairs, and have received widespread support for our efforts.

As education chairs, you all have great respect and pride for our city's school system. But we come seeking a different kind of pride. Respect for the LGBTQ community that struggles everyday to learn and achieve academic excellence in the greatest city in the world. We implore you to vote yes, not just to improve our schools, but to improve the lives of students all across the city.

Planned Parenthood of New York City

**Planned Parenthood of New York City  
Gender-Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) in NYC Schools  
Int. 1638 and Res. 1442  
September 14, 2017**

Good afternoon. I am Elizabeth Adams, Director of Government Relations at Planned Parenthood of New York City (PPNYC). I am pleased to submit testimony at today's hearing on Gender Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) in New York City schools. Thank you to Education Chair Council Member Daniel Dromm for convening this hearing, as well as Council Member Ben Kallos, Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, and the entire Committee for their dedication to these issues.

PPNYC provides education, training and outreach to more than 25,000 youth, adults and professionals annually. Our programs are grounded in the belief that education should support a person's whole self and well-being and meet the needs of all people. One of our curricula, titled *All of Us*, is designed as a holistic model of sexual health education for middle and high school students, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and gender non-conforming (LGB and TGNC) youth. *All of Us* addresses topics including physiology, healthy relationships, gender and sexuality, communication, and safer sex, in ways that are adaptable for customized implementation in school and after-school settings. The curriculum provides teens with sexual health information that is medically accurate and age appropriate, while remaining inclusive of diverse sexual orientations, identities, and gender expressions.

As a leading sexual health education provider, PPNYC recognizes the importance of cultivating a supportive and inclusive school environment for all students to thrive. One of the most critical components of our sexuality education workshops is the commitment to creating a safer and braver space for students to ask sensitive or tricky questions. Staff often hear questions that boil down to "am I normal?" or "am I safe?" and find that students usually just want to know that their bodies, their behaviors, and their identities are valid. Safety and understanding are core components of comprehensive sexuality education and need to be core components of a school's broader environment as well.

While all students deserve to feel supported and safe in their schools, bullying, harassment, and discrimination disproportionately impact LGB and TGNC students. Recent CDC survey results found that compared with their peers, lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) high school students are significantly more likely to experience dating violence, bullying, and sexual assault than their heterosexual peers.<sup>1</sup> LGB students were almost four times as likely to report being physically forced to have sex (18% vs. 5%) and more than twice as likely to report sexual dating violence (23% vs. 9%).<sup>2</sup> The CDC report also found that LGB students are at substantial risk for suicide, depression, and absenteeism because they do not feel safe

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<sup>1</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention, August 2016, "First National Study of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Students' Health Finds Higher Levels of Physical/Sexual Violence and Bullying Than Peers," retrieved from: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom/2016/lgb-youth-report-press-release.html>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

for being who they are.<sup>3</sup> For transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) youth, school can be even harder; nationwide, 78% of transgender individuals have reported being harassed and 35% report being physically assaulted because of their gender identity.<sup>4</sup> These findings reveal an urgent need for public health and education agencies to prioritize stronger measures for the safety and wellbeing of LGB and TGNC youth.

A growing body of research shows the positive impact Gender Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) have on students and school climate. GSAs are student-led clubs that bring in LGB and TGNC curriculum resources, coordinate trainings for teachers and students, and help to improve school awareness of gender and sexuality. GSAs also often serve as an important meeting space for student support and queer student-led activism. According to a report by GLSEN, students in schools with GSAs are less likely to hear homophobic remarks in school on a daily basis (57% versus 75%), and LGBT students are less likely than those at schools without a GSA to report feeling unsafe in school because of their sexuality (61% versus 68%).<sup>5</sup>

GSAs have also been shown to be important in helping students identify staff they can trust. Students in schools with a GSA are more likely to report that school staff are supportive of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students (52% versus 37%) and are also significantly more likely than students in schools without a GSA to know a supportive adult at school (84% versus 56%). Despite the enactment of New York's Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) in 2010, New York City public schools continue to report extremely low rates of harassment and discrimination of marginalized students. In the 2014-15 school year, 53% of schools reported zero incidents of harassment, bullying, or discrimination of students, and 94% reported only 10 incidents or fewer. This raises questions of how well schools are providing an environment for students to feel safe in reaching out to staff for support.

The bills proposed today are proactive measures to connect students to gender and sexuality resources, support, and trusted teachers in New York City schools. Int. 1638 would require the Department of Education to collect and report data on GSAs in New York City middle and high schools, and Res. 1442 would call on the Department of Education to create and maintain functional GSAs in all New York City middle and high schools.

PPNYC proudly supports the efforts of Int. 1638 and Res. 1442 to better understand the New York City school landscape and identify opportunities to improve young people's access to support and resources. GSAs have the ability to deeply affect a student's life and we applaud measures to cultivate more safe spaces. One PPNYC educator recently shared, "I have seen first-hand the impact that having a space to be

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Grant, Jaime, Lisa Mottet, and Justin Tanis. (2011). *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force*. Retrieved from [http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/ntds\\_full.pdf](http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_full.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> GLSEN (2007). *Gay-Straight Alliances: Creating safer schools for LGBT students and their allies*. (GLSEN Research Brief). New York: Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network. Retrieved from <https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Gay-Straight%20Alliances.pdf>

oneself, and feel safe doing so, has on young folks. If we could provide the resources and support to create that space in our public schools that would be game changing for so many young people.” We hope this legislation will serve as a useful tool for DOE to better liaise with schools on LGB and TGNC student inclusion measures, as well as to strengthen its commitment to fostering safe and supportive school environments.

While PPNYC is pleased to support this legislation, it is important to acknowledge that for GSAs to provide the safe spaces and support young people deserve, they must be adequately resourced and invested in. The goal of expanding GSAs to middle and high schools citywide is important, yet, it is critical that they are led by committed and well-equipped staff. Currently, GSAs are often run by teachers who are deeply invested in the program and decide to champion it in their school. According to a PPNYC educator, “It’s almost always the case that a teacher has a personal commitment to providing a safe space for young queer teens and very rarely are they provided with any resources to run the GSA.” For New York City to effectively enact stronger support measures for LGB and TGNC students citywide, GSAs need sufficient funding and teachers must be provided with training and resources.

In order to best achieve the goals of the proposed legislation, PPNYC proposes the following recommendations. First, we recommend that all GSA assigned staff receive training in trauma informed care, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, and cultural responsiveness. It is important that students seeking compassionate resources and support not be subjected to potential trauma when seeking out a trusted adult. Second, while we applaud the legislation’s commitment to protecting student and teacher privacy, we recommend assigned GSA staff contacts be made available to DOE central staff to ensure clear and consistent communication. Further, we recognize that extensive reporting can be burdensome on staff and may not always accurately reflect the qualitative work of a GSA, and so recommend that both the meeting frequency and attendee number reporting requirements be lifted. Lastly, we recommend that the DOE’s LGBT school community liaison collaborate closely with schools to facilitate GSA staff communication across schools and ensure that staff have the proper training and support to implement a successful program.

We applaud the commitment to expand GSAs citywide and look to the DOE for implementation that includes adequate funding and staff support, comprehensive training for assigned teachers, and reporting that is meaningful, not burdensome. The City Council and the NYC Department of Education acknowledge that New York is lagging when it comes to the provision of sexuality education in schools. We need a holistic model that prioritizes health beyond just a few lessons during senior year of high school, and connects young people to a range of resources needed to feel safe and lead healthy and fulfilling lives. We are proud to support the Council’s proposed legislation, which would increase efforts to connect students to GSAs, and hope to be a resource and a partner as these conversations move forward.





**Advocates for Children of New York**  
Protecting every child's right to learn

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**Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council  
Committee on Education**

**RE: Int. No 1638 and Res. No. 1442 calling on the Department of Education to create and maintain a Gender-Sexuality Alliance in all Middle and High Schools to support and protect LGBTQ and other vulnerable students.**

**September 14, 2017**

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Good afternoon. My name is Gena Miller. I am a staff attorney and Greenberg Traurig Equal Justice Works Fellow in the School Justice Project at Advocates for Children of New York (“AFC”), where I represent students who are bullied and accused of bullying with a special focus on Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer or Questioning (“LGBTQ”) students and students with disabilities. I also provide trainings to parents, students, and professionals on bullying behavior. Each year, we help thousands of parents navigate the education system, and we receive numerous calls on our Helpline about the New York City Department of Education’s (“DOE’s”) failure to address bullying. While AFC has always provided advice and trainings on bullying, my fellowship is enabling AFC to address the issue more systemically.

We appreciate the City Council’s efforts to make schools safer and more inclusive places to learn through Resolution 1442 and Introduction 1638. Gender-Sexuality Alliances (“GSA”) provide vital identity-affirming spaces to gender non-conforming students, LGBTQ students, and allies who are disproportionately affected by bullying behavior. GSAs help to prevent bullying behavior by making clear that



gender non-conforming and LGBTQ students are valuable members of the school community and by creating a forum for these students to develop leadership skills and inclusivity strategies to use within their school communities. GSAs also foster inclusive school communities by helping LGBTQ and gender non-conforming students identify and engage with supportive school staff and other adults in the community. GSAs combat bullying behavior and promote understanding and respect in the school community by encouraging dialogue and providing supportive resources.

Bolstering and expanding support for GSAs will make schools healthier learning environments, but additional steps are needed. Another way to make schools safer for all students is by better training students, staff members, and parents how to report bullying behavior and how schools must respond when bullying behavior occurs. In order to comply with the New York State Dignity for All Students Act (“DASA”), the DOE developed an anti-bullying program called Respect For All (“RFA”) that requires each school to designate one staff member as the RFA liaison. Each RFA liaison must be trained in anti-bullying laws, regulations, and strategies. The RFA Liaison must turnkey this information to students and staff at her school and serve as a resource for stakeholders seeking to report and address bullying behavior.

Over the past few years, our Helpline staff have fielded an increasing number of calls from families concerned that their child has continued to experience bullying despite reporting it to school staff. However, in our experience working on bullying



issues, families and even school staff are typically unaware of who the RFA Liaison is at their school or that such a role exists. Additionally, on August 31, 2016, the New York State Attorney General and the New York State Education Department Commissioner issued a joint Dear Colleague Letter analyzing data reported by school districts pursuant to DASA, suggesting that school districts – New York City, in particular – are significantly underreporting the number of bullying incidents and need to improve DASA training and awareness of its protections.

A costless step the DOE should take to expand stakeholder awareness is to publicize the name and contact information of each school’s RFA Liaison on the homepage of each school’s website. Posting the information on the internet will make this information widely accessible. It will also help to hold schools accountable for appointing and training RFA Liaisons. As noted in the State Attorney General and State Education Department Commissioner’s Dear Colleague Letter, notifying students of their RFA Liaisons through opening-day orientations or school assemblies is important, but insufficient. Later in the school year, students may not recall the contact information or the departure of the RFA Liaison may render the information inaccurate.

Listing the RFA Liaison’s name and contact information on the school portal will also help the DOE comply with DASA. DASA requires that schools provide the name and contact information of each DASA Coordinator (RFA Liaison) to all students, parents, and school staff by, among other ways, posting this information on



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the school's internet website. Therefore, we urge the City Council to call upon the DOE to post the name and contact information of each school's RFA liaison on each school's online school portal.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

## **Testimony of Ananya Roy**

### **New York City Council: Committee on Education**

Good afternoon, Chairman Dromm and Committee Members. My name is Ananya Roy and I am a sophomore at the Bronx High School of Science. I also identify as queer. Today, I would like to share how being queer and being a part of the GSA at school has shaped my experience in school and at home.

Prior to Bronx Science, I went to school at East Side Middle School. In seventh grade, I figured out that I liked girls alongside boys. Suddenly, I had all these questions about my identity without anyone to talk to about it. I had known from sixth grade that our school had a functioning GSA, but I saw no point in attending since I didn't see myself as part of the community or even think about LGBTQ+ issues. So, I attended a couple of GSA sessions to see what I was getting myself into, and I fell in love with it. My GSA advisor, Alejandro Forigua, ran sessions that combined sharing personal experiences along with educating us about the LGBTQ+ community.

As a queer desi person, our situation can be especially debilitating with homophobia being extremely prevalent in our communities. I recall this one particular moment where my dad insisted that gay people were mentally ill and needed treatment. There are countless times where my uncle has been disgusted with his classmate because his classmate is gay, and my uncle was angry because he had been touched by this classmate. Although it was painful, sharing all of that with the GSA, it helped me not internalize the homophobia, and it helped me self-validate my sexuality. GSA was the one place where I felt safe and comfortable because I knew that I would never be able to come out to my parents without facing disastrous consequences. Without the support that I found in GSA, I know that my life would have spiraled downward to a much darker place, a place that too many people in my situation have found themselves. GSA also steered me from letting the subtle homophobia of my classmates get to me, such as when some girls in PE would almost recoil if I made any contact with them. I heard the snickers my classmates made behind my back because I spoke so openly about my queerness.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak about my personal experiences and I hope that you will see how critical a GSA has been, both in terms of creating a safe place for LGBTQ+ students and validating our identities even when our friends, classmates, and families may not.

Testimony of  
Olin Winn-Ritzenberg, LMSW  
Youth Education Services Coordinator  
The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center

In response to the  
New York City Council's Committee on Civil Rights  
On Int. 1638 and Res. 1442.

Submitted on September 14, 2017

To the  
New York City Council  
Committee on Education  
250 Broadway, Committee Room  
New York, NY 10007

# THE CENTER

Councilmembers Dromm and Kallos, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and for convening a hearing on these two pieces of legislation. My name is Olin Winn-Ritzenberg, and I serve as Youth Education Services Coordinator at The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center (The Center) in New York City. As the child of two lifelong educators and having focused specifically on working with youth while receiving my masters of social work, it is an honor to speak on behalf of The Center regarding the importance of introduction 1638 and resolution 1442.

Established in 1983, The Center has empowered our community members to lead healthy, successful lives, while celebrating our diversity and advocating for justice and opportunity. Specifically dealing with LGBT youth, The Center serves an estimated 1,000 LGBTQ youth annually and has served youth ages 13 – 22 with community support during non-school hours to foster healthy academic development in a safe, affirming, educational and drug-free environment since 1989. Additionally, The Center has provided trainings to the New York State School Boards Association regarding treatment of LGBT youth in New York's schools and served on the Department of Education's LGBT Advisory Board.

According to Advocates for Youth, LGBT youth often suffer from disparate rates of substance use, depression, suicide ideation, harassment, physical and emotional abuse, sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), and teenage pregnancy.<sup>1</sup> The increased risk and discomfort that LGBT youth feel is often the result of negative environmental stressors they confront in their schools, homes, and communities. Recent research also shows that youth suffering from such health risks are at greater academic risk than their peers. They are more likely to skip class, miss entire days of school, have lower grades and educational outcomes, and less likely to consider

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<sup>1</sup> [www.advocatesforyouth.org/glbtc-issues-home](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/glbtc-issues-home)

# THE CENTER

post-secondary education. For example, a GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) survey of 7,261 middle and high school students found that nearly 9 out of 10 LGBTQ students experienced harassment at school in the past year and nearly two-thirds felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation.

Today's hearing shines light on the ongoing stigma and discrimination LGBT youth confront in their lives, whether at school, in their communities, or at home, and for that The Center applauds the bravery of New York City public school students in authoring legislative actions that aim to make New York public schools more inclusive.

In recognition of that potential outcome, The Center commends the Council's willingness to address these issues, particularly in Res. 1442, calling on the Department of Education to launch and maintain functioning Gender-Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) at every middle and high school. Res. 1442 can greatly impact everyday lives of LGBT youth. Creating and maintaining functioning GSAs at every middle and high school diminishes the stigma that LGBT youth experience for being their authentic selves. We must normalize the lives of LGBT youth by integrating their stories and truths into day-to-day experiences, like attending school.

Regarding Int. 1638, an online report of GSAs throughout New York City creates an informed community that can learn and improve together by cultivating resource sharing, support, and transparency between GSAs throughout the City, community-based organizations that serve LGBT youth, and other LGBT-affirming spaces. Schools looking to start GSAs frequently reach out to The Center for resources on how to start GSAs on campus. Transparent online reporting will allow students and teachers to collaborate and develop resources that evolve with each GSAs needs along with finding and creating allies through the City. Additionally, for youth that are not out as LGBT while in school, the presence of a GSA on campus can be the exact demonstration of acceptance and allyship youth need to feel comfortable with



# THE CENTER

their sexual orientation and gender identity.

As The Center's youth education services coordinator, I frequently hear LGBT youth stating that they don't want to go to school because they don't feel safe. It should never come to that. These legislative actions working in tandem will allow youth to feel safe, stay in school, and be openly accepted for their sexual orientation and gender identity by classmates, teachers, and their schools.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1638 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ayisha Irfan

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Gale Brewer (Manhattan Borough Board)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 1442

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ananya Ray

Address: 550 W 54th St, Apt 923, NY, NY, 10019

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1638 Res. No. 1442

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ELIZABETH ADAMS

Address: 26 BLEECKER ST.

I represent: PLANNED PARENTHOOD OF NYC

Address: 26 Bleecker St.

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/14/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Janella Hinds

Address: 52 Broadway, NYC

I represent: United Federation of Teachers

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/14/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ANTHONY HARMON

Address: 52 BROADWAY

I represent: UFT

Address: 52 BROADWAY

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1638 Res. No. 1442

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/14/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Olin Winn-Ritzenberg

Address: 420 6th Ave Apt #6 Brooklyn, NY 11215

I represent: The LGBT Community Center

Address: 208 West 13th St New York, NY 10011

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1638 Res. No. 1442

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/14/2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: KEVIN DOZIER

Address: 200 E 94th ST NY, NY 10128

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1638 Res. No. 1442

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9-14-2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Clayton L. John

Address: 848 E 54<sup>th</sup> St, Bklyn, NY 11210

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1638 Res. No. 1442

in favor  in opposition

Date: September 14, 2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Benjamin Zekauskas

Address: 331 E 91 Street New York, NY 10128

I represent: ESMS GSA

Address: 331 E 91 Street New York, NY 10128

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1638 Res. No. 1772

in favor  in opposition

Date: September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Valerie Franchitti

Address: 331 east 93<sup>rd</sup> Street NYC 10128

I represent: East Side Middle School (ESA)

Address: 331 east 93<sup>rd</sup> Street NYC 10128

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1638 Res. No. 1447

in favor  in opposition

Date: 09/14/2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ALEJANDRO FORIGUA

Address: 331 E 91<sup>st</sup> STREET, NY, NY 10128

I represent: EAST SIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Address: 331 E 91<sup>st</sup> STREET, NY, NY 10128

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/14/2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Katerina Carr

Address: 333 East 80th St. Apt. 16

I represent: Manhattan Leadership Council

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

X

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 1638

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Clayton Seliga

Address: 450 North End Avenue New York, NY 10222 Apt 14 I

I represent: the Manhattan Student Leadership Council

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1638 Res. No. 1442

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/14/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ty Cutler

Address: 40 white st

I represent: Manhattan Student Council

Address: 49 St green place

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jared Fox

Address: Jay Murray

I represent: NYC DOE

Address: 52 Chambers St NY 10007

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lois Herrera

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYC DOE

Address: 52 Chambers St. NY NY 10007

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jayne Murray

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYC DOE

Address: 52 Chambers St NY, NY 10007

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1038 Res. No. 1442

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/14/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gena Miller

Address: 151 West 30th St 5<sup>th</sup> Fl. New York NY 10001

I represent: Advocates for Children

Address: see above

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms