

**Testimony of the NYC Department of Education  
on Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination in NYC Schools  
- Protecting LGBTQ and Other Vulnerable Students**

**Before the NYC Council Committee on Education**

October 19, 2016

Elizabeth Rose, Deputy Chancellor, Division of Operations

Good Afternoon Chair Dromm and Members of the Education Committee. I am Elizabeth Rose, Deputy Chancellor for the Division of Operations at the New York City Department of Education (DOE). I am joined by Jared Fox, the DOE's LGBTQ Community Liaison, and Bonnie Laboy, Superintendent for Community School District 2 in Manhattan. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the DOE's work to ensure that all of our schools maintain a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment for all students and staff, and specifically for our LGBTQ and other vulnerable youth.

Cultivating and maintaining a positive and supportive school culture is one of Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña's top priorities. The DOE works to promote a positive, inclusive school culture that is free from bullying and bias-based harassment and intimidation of any kind through a variety of methods, including: establishing and enforcing clear behavioral expectations and guidelines; raising student and staff awareness through our Respect for All program; providing curriculum and professional development opportunities; and establishing strategic partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs).

Before I begin, I would like to thank Chair Dromm and the City Council for your leadership and partnership on this important issue, and for supporting LGBTQ students and staff. Over the years, the DOE has been fortunate to work very closely with the City Council on several school climate initiatives. Last year, with funding from the City Council, we were able to hire a full time LGBTQ Community Liaison. The funding for this position was baselined in DOE's budget beginning this school year. The position, currently held by Jared Fox, has been invaluable in our work to ensure that schools maintain an inclusive and supportive environment.

The safety of every student is of paramount concern to the DOE. To that end, Chancellor's Regulations A-831 and A-832 prohibit all forms of student-to-student bullying and intimidation, sexual harassment, and bias-based behavior on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, or weight. The policies and procedures of Regulation A-832, which conform to New York State's Dignity For All Students Act (DASA), extend to behavior that happens on school grounds, school buses, and at all school-sponsored activities, programs and events, and "on other than school property when such behavior" interferes with



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the educational process. This becomes especially relevant with the multiple forms of social media at students' disposal.

A-832 requires staff to report all incidents of bullying and for schools to investigate all reports of bullying in accordance with the established procedures and protocols. A-832 requires the appointment by the principal of at least one full-time Respect for All Liaison in each school to whom reports of bullying can be made and who serves as a resource for the school. The Discipline Code outlines the range of disciplinary responses and/or supports and interventions that may be imposed based on the findings of the investigation.

As many of you know, Respect for All is a cornerstone of our initiatives to combat bullying through celebrating and recognizing the richness of our City's diversity. Respect for All involves proactive, universal activities, and classroom lessons to promote positive and respectful behavior and attitudes. A key focus of the Respect for All program continues to be professional development because of the vital role school staff play in creating a supportive and inclusive school culture and the critical impact they have in nurturing positive social behavior in our students. These trainings include:

- **Respect for All Liaison**—All schools are required to designate a Respect for All liaison who must attend a mandatory two-day training that was developed in collaboration with Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN), Morningside Center, Operation Respect, and the YES Program of the NYC LGBTQ Center. This training takes the lens of LGBTQ issues as an entry point to promoting respect for all students. The training is offered for schools serving grades K–5 and 6–12.
- **Respect for All: Confronting Religious Biases**—In collaboration with the Anti-Defamation League, last spring we began offering one-day training designed to help school-based staff and students develop a common language for discussing issues of cultural competency and to increase participants' likelihood to interrupt and address religious bias and bullying. While this training is open to all staff, we targeted schools with a number of incidents.

All schools are required to distribute our *Respect for All in NYC Public Schools* brochure and display a Respect for All poster that identifies a designated staff person to whom concerns and complaints can be addressed. Last year, we added a second poster highlighting that Respect for All includes LGBTQ students and indicating the designated staff person. Concerns and complaints about bullying and intimidation can be also sent directly to the Respect for All email address, which is monitored by staff within the Office of Safety and Youth Development (OSYD).

Additionally, our borough-based Field Support Centers (FSC) provide direct support to schools on a daily basis. The FSCs include positions that have not existed before, such as the addition of a School Climate and Culture Manager who works with other FSC Student Support Services staff and OSYD staff to address the climate and culture in schools and monitor incident reports



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to determine if schools have noticeable trends or spikes in incidents related to bullying or harassment.

Another effort to improve school climate and supports for students is our expansion of restorative practices. Under this Administration, and with the welcome support of the City Council, we have significantly expanded preventive and responsive training in restorative practices in schools, as well as on-site coaching in these approaches. Restorative practices are effective in creating and sustaining positive and inclusive school climates, as well as being an effective way to respond to situations involving harm. Bullying is often an insidious, secretive behavior, more easily committed when the target and bully are not well known to each other. Restorative circles help students build relationships and get to know each other in a personal way. We are also very proud of a new component that we have included in our restorative practices training, one that seeks to empower students to stand up to bullying. In collaboration with our CBO partners, we have updated our training and student advisory curriculum, which now includes an entire unit called “Celebrating Identity, Standing Up to Oppression.” We use this new component promoting diversity in all of our training in restorative practices.

We launched our initial version of the Transgender Student Guidelines in March 2014 to provide direction for schools and support for transgender students. These guidelines are intended to help schools ensure a safe learning environment free of discrimination and harassment, and to promote the educational and social integration of transgender students. NYC continues to be a leader in this area: our guidelines are currently being revised based on almost two years of implementation and best practices for students, families, staff, and community-based organizations. The revised guidelines will be published soon and accompanied by central and school-based staff training.

While we have made significant strides to build safe, supportive, and inclusive school communities for all students, especially for our most vulnerable populations who face their own unique challenges, we know there is more work to be done and we are deeply committed to that work.

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

Jared Fox, LGBTQ Community Liaison, Office of Safety and Youth Development

Good Afternoon Chair Dromm and Members of the Education Committee. My name is Jared Fox and I am the DOE’s first-ever LGBTQ Community Liaison. I am thankful for the support of this Committee in the creation of this role and funding for several of the initiatives that we have undertaken. My gratitude mirrors that of the students, families, and staff I have had the pleasure of working with since January.



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As we speak, just down the road at Stuyvesant High School, the entire freshman class is listening to speakers from one of our community partners, PFLAG. This is the first time that a program of this magnitude has taken place at Stuyvesant, and I am proud to say that this is just one of our projects that encourages respect for gender and sexual diversity, as well as clarifying the rights of LGBTQ students.

Last June, we established an LGBT+ Advisory Council. This Council quickly expanded to include 34 participating organizations that meet bi-monthly to offer support and resources to LGBTQ students and their families.

Families are at the cornerstone of the work we do with students. When we speak of vulnerable populations such as LGBTQ students, there is the conversation of “coming out,” where students disclose to their family, friends, and other loved ones that they identify as LGBTQ. This is why, when I first began in January, I immediately partnered with our Division of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) to offer training to almost 1,000 parent coordinators.

These parent coordinators are among over 2,000 individuals I have personally trained during nearly 40 professional development sessions. These sessions range from a two-hour overview of ways to make schools affirming for LGBTQ individuals to a full-day intensive on gender identity. The attendees include school-based and field support staff, parents, and students.

We also support families headed by LGBTQ parents. We held our first Family Pride event this June in partnership with FACE and the Office of Counseling Support Programs. The celebrations continued during Pride month and we are proud that for the first time the DOE marched in Queens, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and the larger Heritage of Pride events. Even with the downpour of rain in Queens, we were delighted to have students, teachers, and families hold the banner with the DOE logo.

This year, our focus is on expanding curriculum and improving direct student support.

At the DOE, we view curriculum as both a window and a mirror. By that we mean that LGBTQ students can see their identity reflected across the curriculum, while their classmates can see a world outside their own. This philosophy is evident in literature—particularly in books that can transport a student anywhere.

During the 2015–2016 school year, we piloted the Lambda LGBTQ Writers in Schools program to amplify the LGBTQ voice in our English curriculum. The program pairs a teacher with an LGBTQ author, provides students with copies of the books, and brings authors into schools to discuss their work. Our schools hosted 19 visits last year and we will double the reach this year. Many students in our 2015–2016 pilot said it was the first time they had met an author of a book they had read. That was a powerful statement, and we are so grateful for the Council’s support to expand our curriculum initiatives, including launching partnerships with Columbia Teachers College and WNET. These will greatly enhance our existing efforts, including our annually



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published listing of grade appropriate LGBTQ books and our work on infusing LGBTQ themes into literacy and social studies.

One of our priorities this year is to expand the number of Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSA) in our schools. Research from GLSEN has shown that the presence of a GSA has an impact on school climate and culture, with students reporting lower incidences of bullying and harassment on the basis of sexual orientation in these schools.

GSAs create a space for LGBTQ and allied students to socialize, support one another, and advocate for inclusive practices in their schools. This year, GLSEN named the Academy for Young Writers in District 19 in Brooklyn as the GSA of the year nationwide. This is a testament to the high quality of GSAs across the five boroughs.

We have even started a GSA for central office staff. The NYC Schools Pride Employee Resource Group brings together LGBTQ and allied staff from across all five boroughs for social and educational events.

In conclusion, we are deeply committed to providing all of our students, families, and staff with a safe and supportive environment where they can learn and thrive, and we are equally committed to addressing the academic and social-emotional needs of students who exhibit challenging behaviors. While we have made enormous progress, we recognize there is more work to be done. It is our mission to support all schools to become models of positive school climate and culture, in which all students feel included, respected, and safe. To this end, we look forward to continuing to partner with the City Council to reach this goal.

Bonnie Laboy, Superintendent, Community School District 2

Good afternoon Chair Dromm and Members of the Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about our work to support District 2 middle school students who wanted to dive deeper into issues of diversity and tolerance in their schools.

Two years ago, we created a district-wide Middle School Leadership Council to bring together students from different schools to share interests and work collaboratively on a social action project. The students develop democratic leadership skills and are responsible for running the Council and making all decisions. Adult facilitators help students engage in a robust process to reach consensus around a topic that they care deeply about, surface common concerns, research possible solutions, and craft resolutions.

Last year, the Council chose to focus on celebrating diversity and tolerance, and successfully advocated to form a Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) in every middle school in District 2. To learn about the impact GSAs have on schools, students met with LGBTQ advocacy experts as well as elected officials —Councilmember Ben Kallos, Assemblymember Dan Quart, and a representative from Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer's office. Students analyzed



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research showing that students who have a GSA in their school are less likely to hear “gay” used in a negative way, such as, “that’s so gay.” Students in schools with GSAs are also less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression and more likely to feel connected to their school community.

Students in the Council bring ideas back to their school community, and as a result, 16 of the 18 middle schools in District 2 have established a GSA.

I attend monthly meetings with the District 2 Middle School Leadership Council, along with principals David Getz, Jacqueline Getz, and Rocco Macri. Several teachers and guidance counselors also join us. It is obvious that students take great pride in representing their respective schools, and have come to value and embrace different perspectives.

This experience has empowered students to use their voices, exchange ideas, work through differences, and grow as leaders. We hope our middle school initiative will serve as a model for other districts looking to create more diverse and inclusive school communities.

# TESTIMONY

## NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION CHAIRMAN, DANIEL DROMM

### *Oversight – Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination in NYC Schools*

Presented on  
Wednesday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016



### **The Council of School Supervisors and Administrators**

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**FOR THE RECORD**

## **NYC Council Education Hearing**

### **Oversight – Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in NYC Schools**

I would like to thank the City Council for the opportunity to submit this written testimony on behalf of the nearly 16,000 Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA) members. We thank you for the opportunity to present our opinions on “Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in NYC Schools.”

As you know, bullying and harassment impact individuals across race, gender, religion, and socioeconomic status, and has been an ongoing topic of discussion across our country for years. The rise of social media and cyberbullying has taken malicious harassment to a new level and has forced communities, elected officials and education leaders nationally to come up with new and innovative ways of confronting the issue.

In 1999, Georgia became the first State to pass anti-bullying legislation, and by April of 2015 every state in the country had passed some form of anti-bullying statute. In 2010 the New York State legislature passed the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA), which required public schools across the state to record incidents of bullying in a public database. Our Executive Leadership Institute (ELI) is a major proponent of DASA, which has proven to be a highly successful training program for our members.

Locally, New York City Schools Chancellor Carmen Farina introduced Regulation A-832, which prohibits student-to-student discrimination, and the Respect for All (RFA) initiative, designed to maintain a safe and supportive learning environment free from harassment and intimidation. Both initiatives were steps in the right direction for making our schools welcoming places for all students.

At CSA we believe that schools, as institutions of learning, should have at their philosophical core a positive culture that fosters respect of both students and staff. Such a positive climate has a direct impact on how students treat each other, in addition to how well the students will learn.

In these ideal facilities, teachers and administrators work endlessly to create a culture that works to prevent bullying, harassment, and discrimination. But school leaders should not have to put together anti-bullying programs piecemeal. Government must give school officials the financial resources they need to hire professionals to direct these anti-bullying efforts, and to train staff in conflict resolution and dispute mediation techniques.

The “Teaching Tolerance” platform is one of many tools that provides educators with best practices and online curriculums to address issues around bullying, harassment, and discrimination in the classroom. As quoted, “Tolerance is respect, acceptance, and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world’s cultures, our forms of expression, and ways of being human.” These curriculums help educators and students of all backgrounds explore new perspectives, new concepts of identity and diversity, and proactive ways of organizing to end bullying.

Aside from resources and training, awareness of each school's student community is imperative. According to a Human Rights Campaign study, "LGBT students report being harassed at school, both verbally and physically at twice the rate of non-LGBT youth." Results of the survey also pointed out that LGBT students are more likely to experience negative educational outcomes at school due to heightened stressors of bullying and harassment. However, when schools create a supportive environment for LGBT students, it has shown that it improves the educational outcome for all students. This example can be applied to all demographics, and proves that through inclusive policies and nurturing practices, educators have the ability to build an educational environment that is welcoming and supportive to all students.

There's also an opportunity to utilize resources within our public schools and the Department of Education's School-based Mental Health programs. These programs focus on providing healthy social, emotional, and behavioral support and development for students. With collaboration and interagency support, NYC schools will have the personnel needed to provide support and services to the school, families, and community.

With innovative platforms and proper training, educators and school community members can explore new and innovative ways to make their school a welcoming place for all students. This level of support will allow school officials to focus on what works best for their school and, over time, decrease the likelihood that bullying, harassment, and discrimination will be accepted in or by the academic community.

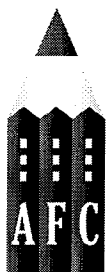
Although bullying remains a major issue for a large number of our city students, CSA believes that a DOE commitment to provide additional resources and training for professional staff, and to working with the City Council and education partners to fund additional training, can systematically counteract bullying, and, over time, make our NYC schools bully free, safe and welcoming spaces for our students.

I thank the Chairman and the Council again for soliciting testimony on this important issue of bullying, harassment, and discrimination in our schools. We still have a long way to go, but by working together we will give our city the best chance to provide safe and equal educational opportunities for New York City students.

Sincerely,

Ernest A. Logan

President



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

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

### RE: Oversight: Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in New York City Schools – Protecting LGBT and Other Vulnerable Students

October 19, 2016

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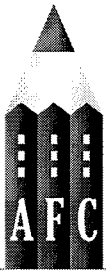
Kim Sweet

#### Deputy Director

Matthew Lenaghan

Good afternoon. My name is Gena Miller. I am a staff attorney and 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 LGBTQ students and students with disabilities. 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 the organization to address the issue more systemically.

A disproportionate number of LGBTQ students and students with disabilities, as well as students who fall under other vulnerable categories such as national origin, religion, and English Language Learner status, are the targets of bullying. Federal, New York State, and New York City law and policy require schools to intervene and prevent bullying. However, State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman’s report relating to the Dignity for All Students Act (“DASA”), issued on August 31, 2016,



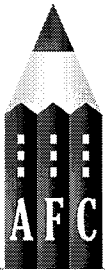
and AFC's experiences fielding complaints from parents and professionals indicate that schools throughout New York City are failing to report, investigate, prevent, and address bullying, harassment, and discrimination. The DOE's apparent non-compliance with DASA's reporting requirements prevents the identification of those schools with staff and students in need of intervention and support, as well as allocation of the resources necessary to build and sustain truly safe and positive school climates.

The effects of bullying are significant. Students who are bullied are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, lower academic achievement, and truancy and to drop out of school. Students who are LGBTQ or have disabilities have disproportionately high rates of school suspension, which experts suggest are attributable in part to behavior related to bullying. My own experience as a public high school teacher in Brooklyn illustrates this point. One of my struggling students with sporadic attendance was taunted constantly in other classes for his poor reading skills and suspected sexual preference. Faculty did not intervene. Frustrated by taunting and academic failure, the student had frequent outbursts. Branded "disruptive," the student faced repeated suspensions instead of receiving adequate supports to address his learning disability and the harassment he endured based on sexual orientation.



We offer several recommendations to the City Council to address this significant issue. First, we request that the City Council urge the DOE to better train school administrators, Respect for All Coordinators, teachers, guidance counselors, social workers, and superintendents on what constitutes bullying, how to prevent it, how to appropriately investigate it and intervene to stop it, and how to provide necessary supports to students who are both bullied and doing the bullying. It is critical that the DOE better train school staff not only on student-to-student bullying, but also on school staff harassment of students. Too often in our work we hear about overburdened and under-resourced school personnel who provoke, threaten, and otherwise harass students with behavioral challenges and push them out of school instead of providing them with the supports they need to succeed.

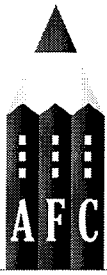
In addition, we strongly encourage the City Council and the Mayor to expand its investment in improving school culture and climate. When children engage in intimidating or disparaging behavior, it is sometimes due to undiagnosed or untreated mental illness that must be addressed in order to curb the behavior. At an American Academy of Pediatrics conference in 2012, researchers presented findings that children aged 6-17 who were considered to be engaged in bullying are more than three times as likely to experience depression, anxiety, and attention deficit disorder. The research suggests that if schools fail to appreciate that bullying is often a symptom of underlying mental health issues, many of our students on both sides of



the conflict dynamic will not be protected. We ask the City Council to urge the DOE to recognize this reality by ensuring that schools prioritize assessment for mental health issues and referral for necessary services when trying to resolve behavior involving bullying. Towards that end, we also ask the City Council to press the Administration to adopt and implement the Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline's recommendations on mental health.

Furthermore, we call on the City Council to urge the Mayor and the DOE to set forth a long-term strategic plan to fund, scale up over time, and effectively implement restorative practices throughout city schools. Aligned with contemporary research, DASA requires school districts to develop guidelines that use a progressive model – and not zero tolerance through automatic suspension – to address bullying. Strategic financial investments and planning will enable the DOE to effectively develop and implement age-appropriate responses, interventions, discipline, and education that varies according to the nature of the behavior, age, and particular history of each student, as required under DASA.

Additionally, we ask the City Council to recommend that the DOE list the name of the Respect for All Coordinator at each school on the home page of every school's website. This will help ensure that every school appoints a Respect for All



Coordinator. It will also make it easier for parents and students to report bullying and harassment incidents.

Finally, while DASA requires school districts to report only material incidents of bullying to the state, schools are also required to log all instances of bullying in the DOE's Online Occurrence Reporting System, known as OORS, and promptly address them. We ask the City Council to strongly recommend that district superintendents and central DOE staff provide better oversight of schools to ensure regular and accurate data collection and analysis of bullying incidents and use this information to strategically allocate necessary resources.

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



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October 19, 2016

### **Testimony for NYC Council Hearing on Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in NYC Schools**

Established in 1994, the Arab-American Family Support Center is a non-profit, secular organization, and we are the oldest and largest Arabic-speaking social services agency in New York City. As a settlement house, we provide culturally and linguistically competent services to Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (AMEMSA) immigrant communities. AAFSC's mission is to empower new immigrants with the tools they need to successfully acclimate to the world around them and become active participants in their communities.

Our Youth Program is truly the heart of our organization. The program encourages students to succeed academically, prepare for college, develop positive leadership skills, express themselves creatively, participate in the community, and work with students of other nationalities to learn to embrace diversity, tolerance, and peace. One of our main objectives is to empower our students to confront and dismantle the pervasive, and increasingly dangerous, environment of harassment and discrimination targeted at Muslims and those perceived as such.

Despite the rapidly growing AMEMSA immigrant population in New York City, the youth we serve face the challenge of fully engaging in their newly found neighborhoods and communities due to a myriad of intersectional challenges, and bullying and harassment in schools marks a major concern. In addition to the stress of flight, migration, and resettlement in a new place, as well as the challenges low-income individuals face on a daily basis, our students now must cope with growing anti-Muslim bigotry.

A recent report from the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino found that hate crimes against Muslims and those perceived as Muslim increased over 78% from 2014 to 2015 in the US, and are now at levels not seen since the aftermath of 9/11. Due to these varied obstacles, many of our students suffer from toxic stress, which can have longlasting negative psychological and physical effects. Moreover, researchers now argue that the "pervasive 'anti-Arabism'" in our current sociopolitical environment has intensified the effects of stress related to cultural adjustment for immigrant youth. In January 2016, researchers from the University of Pennsylvania reported that discrimination functions as a risk factor for significant levels of clinical depression in Muslims, and also found that being called offensive names has the strongest effect in developing depression. These disturbing trends have directly impacted the AAFSC community; one of AAFSC's students was recently called "ISIS" by a teacher for wearing their *keffiyeh* (a traditional Middle Eastern scarf) in class, and a 19-year-old man was recently attacked in Astoria, Queens by three young men who yelled "ISIS and 'Arab'."

We would like to see the schools that our students attend adopt more accepting practices towards the immigrant community. We find that many of our students are subjected to a severe lack of cultural competence at their schools. For example, we have seen a number of girls and young women end up failing their gym classes because of dress code policies that they are uncomfortable with for personal and faith-based reasons; they then are required to attend summer school purely to make up these gym



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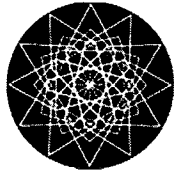
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credits. Our students must deal with ingrained structural racism at their schools. In fact, the majority of our students attend a school that has a long history of racial discrimination; in 2012, the principal was fired for anti-Arab and anti-Muslim discrimination. Regardless of these actions and policy changes, we still see evidence of our students not receiving the care they need. AAFSC advocates on behalf of our students, and all those who are made to feel unsafe due to their state of homelessness, their gender identity, sexual preference, disability status, ethnicity, religious beliefs, or any other aspect of their identity.



# Muslim Community Network

Connecting Communities, Creating New Spaces for Engagement

Thank you for inviting the Muslim Community Network to offer testimony on the Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in NYC Schools – which Protects LGBTQ and as stated in the title, “Other Vulnerable Students”. The harassment and discrimination that the LGBTQ community has experienced in schools and in society cannot be dismissed. My organization and I stand for their right to live free of harassment and discrimination in schools and in our great city.

Upon being requested to offer testimony for this hearing, and lending my support for the LGBT community, I also want to present to the council the importance of defining the “Other Vulnerable Students” in more detail to capture the pain and suffering of all students and I’d like to highlight that Arab, Muslim and South Asian Students, specifically Sikhs, who since the aftermath of 9/11 have also been at the receiving end of bullying, harassment and discrimination. Over the last few months hate crimes against Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim have dramatically increased including the deaths of 3 members of the Muslim community. It is incumbent on all of us to make sure we protect each and every child in our school system.

On Oct. 26, 2006, Abdulla Mohammed was bound and gagged with tape and locked in a closet where two classmates battered him with racial and ethnic slurs for about eight minutes. It happened in his fourth grade classroom at Ryder Elementary School in Brooklyn. It happened with a substitute teacher present. Abdullah, who was nine years old at the time of the assault, was born in Yemen. His assailants shouted slurs to the effect of “go back to your country, we don’t want you here.” The incident only ended after another classmate asked the substitute teacher to intervene. It left Abdullah emotionally and mentally scarred. (NYCLU and NYCBAR)

More recently, Nadeen, an Arab and Muslim daughter of a NYPD Captain was bullied by a peer in support of Donald Trump’s Muslim ban where she was told Muslims are ISIS and Trump was going to get rid of all Muslims because they are all terrorists. Nadeen went to her teacher who told her she’ll speak to him at the end of class, but that never happened. Nadeen went to the dean and nothing happened. Her parents went up to the school and they did not get the courtesy as parents to speak to the administration, leaving us to bring this case to the Mayor’s Office to address.

Since the beginning of 2016, there have been 5 additional bullying cases of Muslim students that the Council on American Islamic Relations, (CAIR) has represented students and their families.

Jagmohan Singh Premi had his cheekbone fractured in class—the result of a vicious blow from a classmate. The attacker had a key wedged between his knuckles. Following the punch, he tugged Jagmohan’s beard and struck him in the chest—all for no good reason, and all as a teacher watched helplessly. The attacker had made a pastime of harassing Jagmohan, a shy young man of the Sikh faith.

He would mock Jagmohan's stutter and call him "dirty" and "a terrorist" during their English as a second language class at Richmond Hill High School in Queens. He would pull Jagmohan's jacket over his head and throw things at the Sikh student. (NYCLU and NYCBAR)

A report released by the Sikh Coalition in April 2008 found that more than half of Sikh students in the city's public schools have been harassed because of their religion or national origin.

We ask that the definition of "Other Vulnerable Students" is expanded and we work to protect LGBTQ, Arab, Muslim, and South Asian Students among others and includes the following recommendations:

1. We ask that the Education Committee hold a hearing requesting that the DOE share the OORs incident reports that are entered by schools across the city. Upon review of these reports, provide sensitivity trainings in schools with high number of incidents. We ask the Education Committee to encourage the DOE to partner with LGBTQ, Arab, Muslim and South Asian organizations as well as the Commission for Human Rights to devise a K-12 sensitivity curriculum.
2. We ask the Public Safety Committee to request that the NYPD School Safety incorporate sensitivity training specifically on Arab, Muslim and South Asian students in order to serve and protect their rights, not see them through a security lens.
3. We ask the Committee on Cultural Affairs allocate funding for public schools and Arab, Muslim and South Asian cultural arts organizations to educate about these cultures through the arts. When the Mayor and Chancellor announced the Muslim Holidays in 2014, Chancellor Farina stated the holiday as a teachable moment highlighting the diverse cultures of Muslim New Yorkers, let's make it a priority to work with her to make it happen.
4. We ask of each committee to have a quality assurance mechanism to monitor the work and evaluate its effectiveness.

Thank you,

Dr. Debbie Almontaser

\*Dignity Now: The Campaign to Stop Bullying and Bias-Based Harassment in New York City Schools By: NYCLU and NYBAR. file:///C:/Users/naji/Documents/20071764\_DASA\_WhitePaperDignityNow.pdf

## FOR THE RECORD

### *Testimony Before the New York City Council Committee on Education Regarding Bullying, Harassment & Discrimination in NYC Schools-Protecting LGBT and Other Vulnerable Students*

I, Lindsey Duel, on behalf of Generation Q, respectfully submit the following testimony regarding LGBTQ Bullying, Harassment & Discrimination in NYC schools. I would like to thank the Committee on Education for giving Generation Q the opportunity to provide testimony today regarding the need for work on these issues in Queens middle and high schools.

Generation Q, a division of Queens Community House, has existed since 2001, and has been a safe space for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning and other gender non-conforming young people and their allies. Generation Q is the sole LGBTQ and allied youth community program in the borough of Queens. The goals of Generation Q are to maintain a safe space for youth to build a conscious, supportive community; to learn about themselves and society, and to take ownership and pride in who they are and what they can accomplish through dedication and community.

At Generation Q, we provide a weekly support group, individual counseling services, art and other creative workshops. We also host movie screenings and starting in November, our Social Justice Training Program will be meeting weekly. We often partake in trips to partner organizations and this winter, we are planning an ice skating trip at Rockefeller Center.

In my two short months working at Generation Q, I have spent many hours on outreach and program recruitment, working to increase the number of youth attending our program. In this time, I have struggled to connect with schools, mainly high schools, throughout the borough of Queens. After sending numerous e-mails and making many phone calls, to inform schools about Generation Q, it is rare that I will receive a response back.

I have reached out to parent coordinators, school counselors, club advisors, teachers and administrators with very few responses in return. The responses I have received are often brief, expressing little interest or understanding of how important it is to have the connection between the schools and a program like ours.

Through my research and contact efforts, I have found that very few of the schools in Queens have LGBTQ clubs (SAGA, GSA, etc.) leaving a need for a community and safe space for LGBTQ youth. Many of Generation Q's participants have expressed their lack of a Queer community in middle and high school. Secondary school is already a difficult time for many students; I believe, without a community to identify with, LGBTQ youth are at a greater risk for bullying, harassment and discrimination.

I am concerned for the LGBTQ youth in our schools. With many schools lacking LGBTQ specific organizations or clubs, Generation Q can fill the void where these LGBTQ spaces do not exist. Support services for these youth are greatly in need as the number of students who are out at LGBTQ increases each day. Schools should strive to create a safe environment for all students, including LGBTQ youth, providing an environment where they can feel safe to be who they are and share their identity with their peers and teachers without the risk of discrimination.

As a new program director, I ask that the Committee on Education make the inclusion of LGBTQ alliances in schools a top priority and strongly encourage schools to connect with LGBTQ youth programs, such as Generation Q. In doing so, schools will show their support for their LGBTQ and allied youth, creating more inclusive, safe environments, thereby reducing the risk of bullying, harassment and discrimination against these students.

*Queens Community House (QCH) is a multi-site, multi-service settlement house that serves the diverse population of Queens. QCH programs help to meet the needs of people of all ages, races and ethnicities while supporting the viability of the borough as a whole. Formed in 1975 (as Forest Hills Community House) to help heal a local neighborhood conflict, our reach has expanded over the years; today, we offer a comprehensive network of educational, health, recreational and social services at 25 program sites across the borough, allowing us to impact individuals, families, and entire communities.*

*We are committed to listening and understanding the emerging needs and challenges of the many distinct groups that comprise our borough and translating those challenges into programs that engage, empower, and create a sense of inclusion and purpose. Our programs help thousands of Queens residents to thrive in school and make healthy life choices, to succeed in educating themselves and become engaged neighbors, to stabilize their housing situations, and to make the most of their senior years. Adhering to a model that combines service provision, organizing, advocacy, and community-building, we strive to make the communities of Queens strong, inclusive, and models of civic life.*



### **Testimony on Institutionalized Bullying in Our Schools**

New York City Council Hearing on Bullying in Schools, October 19, 2016

By Ivan Daquial, Youth Leader, Ugnayan Youth for Justice and Social Change

My name is Ivan Daquial and I am a Youth Leader in Ugnayan Youth for Justice and Social Change, I am a new immigrant in this country, arriving last May, and I am studying at Francis Lewis High school in Fresh Meadows Queens. I am 17 years old and I live in Bellerose Queens, my neighborhood is peaceful. A few weeks prior to the first day of school, I also delivered a testimony to the City Council about my concerns and fears regarding the NYC public school system. I regret to tell that a lot of the concerns I had turned out to be true and there are some other things that I did not expect.

On my first day of school, everything seemed fascinating, the new people I see rushing in and out of classrooms dazzled me, but not long after, I noticed the crookedness of the system I have to deal with. Everything is just so fast, I felt so suffocated and constrained as if I can't move in the hallways especially without being stopped by SSAs. This bothered me, but I thought of it as something as a "thing here". I joked about it with a fellow UGNAYAN Leader that goes to my school and I said: "School to Prison Pipeline at it again."

Two of my teachers stood out the most and honestly makes want to go home and not go to school anymore. My gym teacher, a caucasian man, as He calls on names for attendance, butchered my whole name. He pronounced my name as DAKWIYAL EE VOHN, which actually quite understandable, but when I tried to correct him, He walked near me, I was scared, and He said " It's just business it's nothing personal. It's perfectly legal. Only the DOE chairman can change your grade when I give you a bad one. I am just making sure you know who calls the shots." Then He mispronounced other people's names and quite a lot of us got really offended. He also made a rather insensitive instruction during class saying " If you are financially challenged, and that is a good way to call it when you are poor, broke or whatever... Put it into writing and we will give you clean old uniforms." This is not okay and it is really offensive and insensitive.

Another teacher would be my science teacher, I got transferred to her honors class, and when I asked her how I can cope up with their lesson she answered " I do not look into the past, I focus on the future..." among other things that I honestly did not comprehend because of the fact that English is my 2nd language and she was talking really fast. I explained that I was confused and she said out loud during our class, that I might not belong in that class. We, as a class is terrified to ask questions because she would scream at us and embarrass us. I was teary when she embarrassed me in front of all those people in my class.

Both of my experiences are Institutionalized Bullying, who of so little of faith in the capacity of a learner, gives insults and derogatory words for their amusement? I am in disgusted to say that NYC Public School system is crooked. I was excited to be here. I thought it is something to brag about with my friends back home. Turns out it is more of a horrific narrative than a brag-worthy one.

We are the future of this great nation. We are the stars that will shed light in a society that is dimmed by the past. We do not deserve this maltreatment. We ask that you deepen the understanding and investigation of our experiences on Institutionalized Bullying, allocate the resources for restorative justice, peer counseling and widespread improvement of this broken education system. We are who stand to benefit from a safe, healthy and nurturing school system; and we deserve dignity. Hear us.

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### **Testimony on Institutionalized Bullying in Our Schools**

New York City Council Hearing on Bullying in Schools, October 19, 2016

By Kian Anilao, Youth Leader, Ugnayan Youth for Justice and Social Change

My name is Kian Anilao. I am of Filipino descent, born in the Philippines. I am currently 15 years old. I am giving this testimony, on behalf of not only our organization Ugnayan Youth for Justice and Social Change, but for my fellow friends whom experienced institutionalized bullying within the school system. I am a transfer sophomore from Francis Lewis High School here today to showcase my experiences on institutionalized bullying.

First, I'd like to share an event which occurred on September 29 of 2016 in Room 214. I am disclosing my name and the name of the person enacting the bullying action towards me, upon my request, will remain anonymous. The time was approximately 1:08PM - 2:50PM around 9th period in English 10 Honors. I am a very forgetful man and clumsy when it comes to my studies and overall in general, but I still try my hardest. However during the time of the event, this trait became a to burden me. The teacher requested to take out our homework; one which in this particular instance, I forgot. It was the first homework within the marking period that I forgot in English 10. I began to panic to thought of forgetting and once she got to me I told her I forgot. She then started to scold me and say why didn't you write this down; you should be better than that; didn't you learn how to record stuff last year? I told her that I just transferred here but she didn't listen. Later on in class she wouldn't stop letting it go as when she checked to look at another student she looked at her planner and shoved it right in front of my face saying "Look like this. See." I thought this was 10 minutes ago I thought to myself. Why is she making a big deal out of this. She then on to do this for the rest of class. When I was trying to finish my classwork, I didn't know she was putting up the homework because my classwork was priority. She then yelled out loud, "Kian did you write the homework?" All I could do is stare at her because I was caught up in doing my classwork that I didn't know. But before I could say anything, she said, "You didn't write the homework yet? Oh you're going to remember right just like how you remembered to do your homework last time?" At this point I had enough of the humiliation. The bell rang 2 minutes afterword. I was left with an awful feeling, "How could a teacher do this?" I felt so belittled.

I sat wondering for the rest of the day on what I did wrong to deserve this humiliation. I already have trouble coping with my inability to sometimes recollect past events but that does not excuse and justify the need to humiliate someone like this; not even an adult. It made me feel sickened and angry but deep inside I actually felt sadness. Just one misstep and I get punished with ridicule for a minor mistake. It was just debilitating seeing that and since it was an honors class, standards were much higher as well as the students. "Was I only put to this class by luck?" "Do I even belong in this

class?" "Am I not intelligent and or incompetent as my fellow classmates?"; I started to question if I really did deserve these punishments and that I'm not at par with these other people.

Due to the events that transpired I am currently testifying on this day, this current time to showcase evidence to Council Members of the city of New York of the existence of institutionalized bullying within our school system. My fellow members within our organization have identified our burdensome experience that is institutionalized bullying. I have heard other fellow students who have been dehumanized and humiliated by teachers.

Therefore, if thereby take in the considerations of the given testimonies and give a clear confirmation of action, we as an organization would state and discuss our disputes, demands and any other matter regarding institutionalized bullying and the school to prison pipeline. The first thing that comes up to mind is to work with the New York City Department of Education to work and do something of the matter. The first step I propose is to revise and or abolish certain rules within the school code that give teachers, administrators, school safety agents and other adults in the school system who are unawarely using their power to maintain an environment of institutionalized bullying. In addition, I encourage spending funds to develop school through peer counseling, restorative justice, clubs and extracurriculars rather than security cameras and guards. All in all this concludes my testimony and disputes concerning the matter of institutionalized bullying, it's overall impact and how we can come to an arrangement that will both mutually benefit all of us; the young people and adults who are responsible for the school system, including the honorable Council Members. Thank you.

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**Testimony on Institutionalized Bullying in Our Schools**

New York City Council Hearing on Bullying in Schools, October 19, 2016

By Athena Magno, Youth Leader, Ugnayan Youth for Justice and Social Change

Hi, I'm Athena Magno, I'm a 22 year old college student, who is also apart of the LGBTQ community. I previously attended Long Island City High School in Queens. It has been a few years since I've graduated high school, but the experiences I've faced stay with me to this day. There were so many instances of me being made to feel uncomfortable and degraded by school officials, but these experiences still stand out in my mind.

One incident occurred during my Sophomore year, with my Algebra teacher. We spent the first semester preparing for the Algebra regents, and we were expecting to take it at the end of January. We worked and studied as hard as we could. When regents week in January came, our class had found out that we were not on the list to take the regents test. We confronted our teacher about it, and he told us that we were "too stupid" to take the test. I was completely taken aback by this. He continued to add insult to injury. He explained that if this class couldn't pass the Algebra regents in our freshman year, what made us think we'll pass it this year. I was so humiliated. This came from a man who's supposed to teach us, someone we're supposed to trust. An adult, a teacher, calling his students stupid.

In my junior year, I was being bullied by a classmate for my sexual identity. It took so much courage to come out to my classmates, but it amounted to nothing. I was only bullied, and one student even threatened my life. When I went to my guidance counselor and asked for help, she asked me what I expected her to do. She said that I should've thought of the consequences of expressing my identity so freely. It was so humiliating. Growing up, I thought that guidance counselors were there to listen to you and help you fix your problems. She could have done something, she could have talked to faculty or parents, but she just turned me away. I felt so unsafe that I stopped going to school. I ended up transferring and graduating late.

In my senior year of high school, my girlfriend at the time, and I were planning on going to prom. I wanted to wear a suit rather than a dress. We were all excited about going, but when the principal asked me what I was planning to wear to the prom, she was disgusted. She told me that I was a girl and that I should be wearing a dress. She did not even bother to say this to me privately, she yelled at me in front of everyone. My school was supposed to stand for equality, and to have my principal degrade me for my sexuality was so humiliating and degrading. LIC was full of people with different sexualities, and hearing this hurt me and made me feel bad about my identity.

Long Island City had a system where you were placed in an academy based on your grades. The academy that had the lowest grades were full of minorities, while the academy that had the highest grades were full of Caucasians. As a freshman, I was placed in the academy with the lowest grades. It was the first week of school, and we haven't even begun to know what our grades would be yet. Those in the lowest academy were ridiculed by faculty, and mocked by fellow students.

Institutionalized bullying exists within schools, and the education system. My experiences in high school are just a few examples of how institutionalized bullying shaped my entire education. The youth in today's society are put through gendered, and racially structured classes. The education system is not designed to develop students in a positive way. The stigma that young people are not fully capable, and not intelligent enough needs to be abolished. The youth today are here to be educated, and are here to grow as human beings.

This all can be resolved, and together we can make the steps to help our youth, and strengthen our communities. I suggest training every teacher, and school safety agent extensively, changing the school's disciplinary code, diminishing the unfair suspension system, like B21. Making the school environment a safe space for students is a very crucial point that is needed in order for them to develop. I implore you to not take this lightly, and consider changing the school system in favor of the safety, and welfare of the youth. I ask that you use the public's resources, including those contributed by my parents and my community, towards reinvesting it back into our young people -- investing in peer counseling, restorative justice and ending institutionalized bullying. Young people need schools to be a safe and nurturing place where they can be fully human. Thank you for your time.

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**Testimony before the New York City Council**  
**Committee on Education**  
**Oversight - Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in NYC Schools – Protecting**  
**LGBT and Other Vulnerable Students**  
**October 19, 2016**

Good afternoon. My name is Jillian Weiss. I am a transgender rights attorney and Executive Director of the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund. I have spent much of my career litigating against discrimination and it is my life's work to persistently press forward in the fight to grant the transgender and gender non-conforming community equal protection under the law. I would like to extend my gratitude and appreciation to Education Chair, Council Member Dromm, for bringing us together today to shed light on the issue of bullying in our public schools as it pertains to those who identify as, or are perceived to be LGBTQ.

Founded in 2003, Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund (TLDEF) is committed to ending discrimination based on gender identity and expression, and achieving equality for transgender people. Through impact litigation, service partnerships with the private sector, and education initiatives we ensure the trans community can fully participate in social, cultural, and economic life. While there have been important legislative and regulatory victories in the city of New York, we must not become complacent in the misunderstanding that legal and policy gains have resulted in an end to discrimination for transgender and gender non-conforming people. This is particularly evident within our New York City public schools.

School bullying, both verbal and physical, is perhaps the most pervasive form of discrimination experienced by transgender and gender non-conforming youth. It can also be the most damaging, as it often results in educational pushout, meaning a high dropout rate and lowered life opportunities. According to a national study conducted by GLSEN, 75% of transgender youth feel unsafe at school, are more likely to miss school, and have significantly lower GPAs. This insecurity stems from name calling, inappropriate statements and questions, physical assault, and sexual assault –which is malicious in effect even if not in intent and some of which is excused as “joking around” or “horseplay.” For the transgender and gender non-conforming young people who experience this degradation, and absorb this poison into their psyche, bullying is no laughing matter. More than 50% of transgender youth will have attempted suicide by their 20th birthday. As a former educator myself, in charge of young people in college, and a parent, it is intolerable to see this happening and not take action.

At Transgender Legal, we are contacted by high school students and parents of school-age children who have faced discrimination in public schools and are forced to spend their time and effort on finding legal counsel rather than focusing on going to school and doing their homework. These young people endure abuse that makes a mockery of education. They are forced to drop out of neighborhood

schools in search of a place where they can receive an education instead of abuse. One such case involved a high school student in Manhattan. After experiencing much harassment during her freshman year, this fifteen-year-old transgender girl transferred to a new school, hoping things would be different. Prior to her arrival, however, students learned that a transgender student had been enrolled. A male student confronted her and interrogated her about her gender. Terrified to out herself based on previous experience, the young woman refused to answer. The male student began to abuse her with hateful language, and set out to “prove” to his buddies that she was transgender. She had to endure weeks of daily abuse and seek legal counsel, until the school intervened. This abuse interfered with her emotional health, and her school attendance and schoolwork. It led her and her parents having to spend time seeking legal assistance to stop the abuse. We need to teach our youth how to treat diverse people and to create welcoming environments instead of hateful and abusive ones.

It’s not just students that need to learn this. Problems are exponentially compounded for transgender youth when faculty and administrators do not have the skills and cultural competence to address the needs of transgender and gender non-conforming students. Faculty and administrators who excuse abuse as “jokes,” or as “boys being boys,” and allow abusers to operate with impunity, create environments in which transgender students’ identities are invalidated every time they walk down the hallway, or go to a restroom or dressing room, or a sex segregated activity. This is evident in the case of a transgender high school student in the Bronx who was not permitted by the school administration to use the restroom that matched his gender identity. This young man was required to use the nurse’s bathroom instead, marking him as different every time. Male and female students were segregated by sex to discuss relationships, and he was put in the wrong group, further invalidating his identity and humiliating him. The refusal to recognize him as a young man created alienation and humiliation and not belonging instead of a positive educational experience.

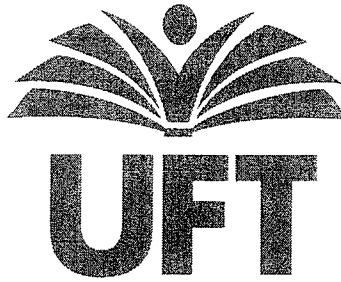
While today’s focus is LGBTQ students, transgender adults in NYC schools are also subject to these same abusive administrations and faculty members. A few years ago I represented a New York City public school teacher planning a transition. My client reached out to the faculty organizer of the school’s Pride group. The organizer, who did not understand trans identity, “outed” the teacher to other members of the faculty, staff, and students, sparking negative comments about the teacher’s appearance.

The teacher was called “weirdo,” “schizophrenic,” “fairy bitch,” and “a tranny mess” by faculty and staff members. The bullying increased over time. Here is an example of the physical abuse inflicted on my client: One day, four staff members surrounded my client, grabbed their genitals, and lifted them by the crotch, singing a vulgar song. Completely humiliated, the teacher reported the incident to the school’s principal. My client was told that they were over-reacting, not being a team player, and the teacher was strongly urged to drop the complaint. Failure to drop the complaint incurred the principal’s wrath, who then waged a campaign to discredit the teacher and have them permanently transferred to another school district. Under enormous pressure, the teacher ultimately left the school, and settled the harassment case under a confidentiality agreement. Imagine what these administrators and teachers would do to a transgender child at their school?

These instances of bullying cannot continue to be swept under the rug, and we cannot wait to incite change. Young people are suffering abuse every day. They cannot wait. We hear their cries. The New York City Department of Education has created a Respect for All program that has trained thousands of school personnel to proactively combat bullying within our schools, and I applaud the DOE for including transgender sensitivity in the Respect for All curriculum. This is certainly a step in the right

direction. However, further action is needed now to ensure that each of New York City's 1,800 schools actively engage in training and education throughout the school year. Respect for all cannot be achieved in week of special programs. It must become the fabric of each school community.

In conclusion, I'd like to once again thank Council Member Dromm and members of the Committee on Education for championing this cause. As elected officials, policy makers and community leaders, our young people depend on us to get this right. Not only do we want to make our schools a safe place for every student to learn and grow, we want to ensure a lasting legacy of inclusion that will stay with our young people for the rest of their lives as they grow to become the citizens who make up the fabric of our lives in this great city. Let's take action now.



TESTIMONY OF  
THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

REGARDING BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION IN NYC SCHOOLS, AND  
PROTECTING LGBTQ & OTHER VULNERABLE STUDENTS

OCTOBER 19, 2016

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to testify here today on behalf of the United Federation of Teachers. My name is Sterling Roberson, and I am the UFT's Vice President for Career and Technical Education High Schools.

Our society has experienced a major cultural shift in recent years when it comes to awareness of gender-identity and gender-equality issues and, in many ways, our schools are a focal point for those changes. More students are identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer than ever before, and many of these students are coming out younger than ever before. By doing so, they often face additional challenges that threaten their safety, health, and well-being. Something that seems as simple as a student dress code or the bathroom that a student is allowed to use is revealed to be more complicated when a student's gender or sexual identity doesn't match societal expectations.

Educators – and counselors in particular – work hard to ensure that all students are treated equally, fairly, and respectfully in our schools, and have an opportunity to participate equally and safely in all school-related activities and programs. We also make great efforts to ensure that students are protected from discrimination based on real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

There can be no doubt that progress has been made to reduce bullying and harassment in our schools, making them safer and more affirming places for our students. Curriculums and classroom discussions now focus on building respect, inclusiveness, and understanding among students. Students now have access to LGBTQ-friendly organizations and clubs, many of them student-led. Outside organizations such as the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network are also regularly providing a wealth of supports and materials to schools.

At Staten Island's New Dorp High School, two teachers and a paraprofessional have organized a Gay-Straight Alliance organization that brings together LGBTQI+ and straight students to support

each other, provide a safe place to socialize and create a platform to fight for racial, gender, LGBTQ, and economic justice. The school also collaborates with the Pride Center of Staten Island to bring services and social opportunities into the school, including an annual LGBTQ prom.

At the Earth School, an elementary school in the East Village, teachers bring the learning into 4th and 5th grade classrooms, where students study 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, and then 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.

And 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've worked through being bullied. It's all part of a larger mission of raising gender awareness and educating other students and teachers about identity.

Harvey Milk has also built a special relationship with Brooke Guinan, a trans FDNY firefighter who addressed the school's graduating class last year. In the months leading up to commencement, Guinan made it her mission to get to know the students by leading voluntary discussion groups over lunch, sharing experiences with students who are still finding their own identities.

But despite efforts like these, schools are in many ways still scrambling to keep up with the times. Even the most understanding of educators can find themselves feeling unsure about how to best support their LGBTQ students. At the UFT, we have responded to that need by providing training for union members and staff, to deepen their understanding of LGBTQ issues.

Our work has included training thousands of UFT members in the "Dignity For All Students Act", or DASA, which includes training around the specific needs of transgender and gender-nonconforming students. Educators who have participated use the trainings to 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 program 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/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.

Still, there remains much work to be done. Students who identify as LGBTQ continue to face bullying and harassment, both physically and verbally. Black gay males and LGBTQ students with disabilities often find themselves at an even greater risk. It's also worth noting that the toxic national dialogue around topics like gay marriage and bathroom usage has only exacerbated these problems.

When students struggle with bullying and harassment, it leaves them more vulnerable to feelings of isolation and depression, fights, substance abuse, truancy, and dropping out. Sadly, the risk of suicide among the LGBTQ population is also much higher than other students.

As educators, parents, advocates and elected officials, we all share the collective responsibility of creating safe and welcoming schools where students can be free to learn and grow, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. Every one of us has a role to play in creating an inclusive school climate.

That work begins with building awareness and understanding, not just among students, but also among our colleagues and within ourselves. We have to divorce ourselves from the politics surrounding these issues, and instead focus exclusively on supporting our students. That begins with regular and intensive training. That work also may mean forming a building committee to evaluate some of your school's policies and operations. Dress policies or prom regulations might have to be changed. A restroom may have to be designated as gender-neutral. Areas of the school where bullying occurs may need additional supervision or cameras. Anti-bullying policies may need explicit guidance on safeguarding LGBTQ students. A school might want to rework its medical forms so that students can communicate their gender identity in a way that's comfortable to them. Surveys can also gauge the tone of the school and provide ideas on how to improve the effectiveness of the school's programs and services. Some schools even create internal structures that can respond to bullying incidents in real time.

A resolution passed this summer by the American Federation of Teachers, our national union, outlined a comprehensive guidance for schools on how to begin providing safe and welcoming learning environments for LGBTQ youth. Among its recommendations:

- Implement anti-bullying policies explicitly protecting LGBTQ students;
- Offer professional development opportunities on issues affecting LGBTQ students;
- Support extracurricular clubs such as Gay-Straight Alliances;
- Develop meaningful family engagement and support for families of LGBTQ students;
- Integrate respect for human rights, including LGBTQ rights, across the curriculum;
- Provide developmentally appropriate resources on LGBTQ issues (e.g., in libraries, faculty resources);
- Collect and review data to identify disparities and barriers for LGBTQ students;
- Designate a building-level staff person who is conversant in issues relating to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression; and
- Adopt specific policies for ensuring transgender students are treated in a manner consistent with their gender identity, including:
  - Using chosen name and pronouns;
  - Changing name and gender in school records;
  - Ensuring student privacy and confidentiality in disclosing private student information;
  - Providing access to facilities and programs according to the student's gender identity;
  - Implementing gender-neutral dress codes; and
  - Reviewing all gender-based activities.

These are just some of the many common sense steps that policymakers can take to make schools safer and more accommodating for all students. None of these strategies are offered in isolation; each initiative should be part of a larger, comprehensive approach to improve the quality of life for everyone within our school buildings.

We must all pull together to combat harassment and discrimination head on. Only by working together can we combat these issues and bring about change. We are grateful that the Council and this committee have chosen to focus on this topic, and we look forward to working with you in the months ahead.

Elvis Miguel

### Testimony

Good afternoon everyone, my name is Elvis Miguel, I am a senior at the High School for Environmental Studies, a member of the NYCLU's Teen Activist Project and also a member of the LGBTQ community. As a senior who has been enrolled in 2 separate New York City public high schools, I have witnessed firsthand how the Department of Education handles matters related to LGBTQ students.

I can honestly say that I have seen an improvement in their attempts to make schools safer and more welcoming for LGBTQ students, however, I do feel as though there are things that can be improved. With policies such as the Dignity for All Students Act, schools are required to have a DASA coordinator on campus that they can report instances of bullying and harassment when it occurs. Even though there are policies in place like DASA, not every student is given this information. This makes it hard for students to report bullying and harassment.

There are many steps the DOE can take to make school environments more welcoming and accepting for LGBTQ students. For example, having schools open up more all gender bathrooms would be a step in the right direction; however, schools should not stop there. These restrooms should be easily accessible to transgender and gender nonconforming students. Also, these students should be allowed to use the locker room and/or bathroom that corresponds to their gender identity or expression. Even though this is required by law, many students don't know it is their right. This information should be shared with all students.

Through my time in the NYCLU's Teen Activist Project, I've learned teachers must respect students' gender pronouns, but this sort of thing isn't talked about in school. Even the basics of gender identity and expression are rarely/not covered in my classes. I would feel more comfortable in school if issues facing LGBTQ students were discussed openly.

When it comes to handling situations of bullying towards LGBTQ students, the DOE has made changes to existing policies, but there is more work to do. Let me start off by saying that I am not a supporter of the zero tolerance policy. Instead of shutting down conversations about LGBTQ issues, teachers should open up more conversations with their students. The first step in doing so is incorporating LGBTQ issues in health classes. Students learn mostly about heterosexual relationships which leaves LGBTQ students excluded from the curriculum and feeling as if their identity or sexual orientation is abnormal. By providing all students the opportunity to learn about LGBTQ people, you will see students become more accepting of their LGBTQ peers, which in turns, leads to less bullying on campus.

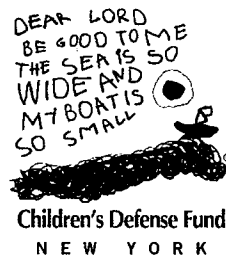
These are just a couple of things to take into consideration that will really benefit LGBTQ students and make it a safe learning environment for them to excel in their academics without the fear of being excluded or harassed for their identity. I appreciate you all for hearing me out, thank you so much for your time.

Testimony of the Children's Defense Fund – New York  
Before the Committee on Education

"Oversight - Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in NYC Schools –  
Protecting LGBT and Other Vulnerable Students"

New York City Council  
October 19, 2016

Charlotte Pope  
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The Children's Defense Fund - New York (CDF-NY) respectfully submits the following testimony regarding "Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in NYC Schools – Protecting LGBT and Other Vulnerable Students." Thank you to Chair Dromm and to the members and staff of the City Council Committee on Education for this opportunity to testify.

The Children's Defense Fund's Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a healthy start, a head start, a fair start, a safe start and a moral start in life, and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. CDF-NY's unique approach to improving conditions for children combines research, public education, policy development, community organizing and statewide advocacy activities, making us an innovative leader for New York's children, particularly in the areas of health, education, early childhood and juvenile justice. Through CDF's Cradle to Prison Pipeline® Campaign – a national initiative to stop the funneling of thousands of children, especially poor children and children of color down life paths that often lead to arrest, conviction and incarceration – CDF-NY works to replace punitive school discipline and safety policies in New York City schools with social and emotional supports that encourage a positive school climate.

### **Overview**

CDF-NY's efforts to promote alternatives to addressing harm in schools and restrict justice system responses to student behavior gives us a unique perspective on bullying, harassment, and discrimination. Our position on punitive disciplinary practices is that they are not in the best interest of students, their safety, or their continued school engagement, and do little to get to the root of how and why students may target one another. We support holistic, restorative solutions to bullying, harassment, and discrimination that include a focus on school culture and climate, professional development of educators, preventative education, and public reporting.

We understand that this oversight hearing intends to seek clarity on the August 2016 report of the State Attorney General addressing the reporting of bullying incidents as mandated by the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA). The study found that about 71% of schools did not report any incidents of bullying for the year 2013-2014, suggesting "both substantial underreporting of material incidents of harassment and discrimination by schools in New York State, along with a significant level of confusion or uncertainty as to how to classify those incidents that are reported."<sup>1</sup> Our testimony focuses on the intent of incident reporting – to foster schools that preserve the dignity of students – and asks to what end reporting should be prioritized in reaching that goal. A proactive plan for creating welcoming, restorative school cultures is one that extends beyond counting or eliminating overt acts of harm, and addresses the role of school culture in discouraging or disincentivizing bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

### **Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination**

We recognize that the dominant understanding of bullying does not acknowledge how societal power relations, including oppression based on race, class, age, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and so on, enter the learning environment and support acts of bullying, and we argue that the problem of bullying extends beyond overt, reportable harassing behavior. To achieve sustainable change, school interventions must take on the task of shifting cultural norms alongside any bullying intervention efforts.

### ***Reporting as a Priority***

Conversations about creating safe schools are often narrowly focused on eliminating individual acts of bullying and harassment that target vulnerable populations. The success of school interventions is typically evaluated by measuring the frequency of reported bullying behaviors or student perceptions of safety even though the reduction of bullying is a measurable outcome that merely regulates violence

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<sup>1</sup> Rider, L. R., and Rosado, L.M. (2016). Re: Dignity for All Students Act: Results of Statewide School District Survey and Guidance on Implementation. New York: New York State Education Department and New York State Office of the Attorney General. Retrieved from [https://ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/dasa\\_-\\_dear\\_colleague\\_letter\\_oag-sed\\_guidance\\_document.pdf](https://ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/dasa_-_dear_colleague_letter_oag-sed_guidance_document.pdf)

rather than addresses it.<sup>2</sup> When we rely on reporting as an indicator of a safe or inclusive school, we fail to account for the diversity of ways bullying, harassment, and discrimination presents themselves in schools, including: discipline practices that punish or exclude; inadequate curriculum and low expectations for students; a lack of community participation in school decision-making; a shortage in appropriate support such as guidance counselors or social workers; and a reliance on law enforcement tactics to control student behavior.

When searching for solutions to the problem of creating supportive environments for young people, conversations typically fixate on interventions that claim to be able to eliminate bullying in school settings. Public discourse about bullying implies that it is something that can be always be seen, analyzed, reported, and ultimately eliminated.<sup>3</sup> Focusing safe schools efforts on the elimination of recognizable violence means all attention is being paid to individuals and their behavior, and none to the cultural systems that reproduce and permit violence, intimidation, or harassment. Strict attention to statistics and measurable events fails to question why the same groups of students are continually targeted for bullying, harassment, and discrimination. We call on the City to call systemic bullying, including but not limited to the conditions listed above, into question, and invest in whole-school interventions that get to the root of harm.

### **The New York State Dignity for All Students Act (DASA)**

DASA reporting follows two sets of procedures. First, schools are responsible for establishing an accessible system for any member of the school community to report incidents of bullying, harassment, and discrimination, and all school employees must be educated about their obligation to report all known or suspected incidents. Second, school districts are required to compile all incidents relevant to DASA and submit annual reports to the New York State Education Department (NYSED). The purpose of this reporting is not intended to be punitive, but rather to assist NYSED and school districts track patterns of violence and bias. Ideally, this data could assist NYSED and other agencies make decisions about where to target resources and how to design effective, relevant educational interventions.<sup>4</sup>

According to research done by the *Queering Education Research Institute (QuERI)*, teacher-reporters do not know what is reportable and have no clear definitions of “an incident based on gender” or race, or any other category.<sup>5</sup> Unless a verbal slur related to the category was used and witnessed, determining a category of offense often requires an in-depth understanding of the social dynamics within the school - a skill that is not prioritized in DASA teacher trainings.<sup>6</sup> QuERI also argues that schools have no incentive to report accurately, and ultimately reporting anxiety distracts from the proactive approach to bullying that was DASA’s legislative intent. It appears as if the focus has turned to record keeping and reporting rather than teaching respect, building stakeholder capacity to prevent harm from happening, and raising awareness amongst all school stakeholders.

### ***DASA in New York City***

According to a resource put together by the Dignity Act Task Force, “The Dignity Act’s underlying premise is that preventive and non-punitive intervention, in response to incidents of discrimination and/or harassment, is the best way to achieve school environments free from harassment and discrimination.”<sup>7</sup> The word “bullying” does not appear in DASA; rather, bullying behavior is a manifestation of the larger problems of discrimination and harassment that DASA seeks to prevent and prohibit.<sup>8</sup> Importantly, the

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<sup>2</sup> Walton, G. (2005). “Bullying widespread:” A critical analysis of research and public discourse on bullying. *Journal of School Violence*, 4, 91–118.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Dignity Act Task Force. (2012). *The New York State Dignity for All Students Act (Dignity Act): A Resource and Promising Practices Guide for School Administrators and Faculty*. New York: New York State Education Department. Retrieved from [http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/documents/Dignity\\_For\\_All\\_Students\\_Act\\_Guidance.pdf](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/documents/Dignity_For_All_Students_Act_Guidance.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Payne, E., and Smith, M. (2015). *Implementing Dignity: New York State’s Dignity for All Students Act, Research and Recommendations*. New York: The Queering Education Research Institute.

<sup>6</sup> Payne, E., and Smith, M. (2015). *Op. Cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Dignity Act Task Force. (2012). *Op. Cit.*

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Dignity Act addresses material incidents of harassment and discrimination of students by students, as well as of students *by faculty or staff*. However, here in New York City, the current Citywide Discipline Code only mentions “student-to-student bullying and/or bias-based behavior” and states, “Any student who believes that he/she has been the victim of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying by another student should report the incident to the RFA [Respect for All] liaison(s) or to any other school employee.”<sup>9</sup> There is an important disconnect between local and state framing of bullying even as DASA makes it the official policy of New York State that all students in public schools have the right to an education free of discrimination and harassment, and that includes the discrimination and harassment school staff engage in.

### **Rethinking Bullying**

A discourse of bullying that focuses on the individual characteristics of “bullies” and “victims” neglects research that examines issues of hostile school culture, the attitudes and training of school professionals, and the ways implementation of state anti-bullying legislation has failed to give districts and schools the needed tools for success. We must think more complexly about what we can and should do to address harm that happens in schools.

In order to prevent and respond to the many ways bullying, harassment, and discrimination show up in schools, we believe that there needs to be a coordinated approach that incorporates structural changes, policy reforms, and intensive, restorative supports. This September, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) released data, pursuant to the Student Safety Act amendments passed last year, illustrating the need for the City to address significant racial disparities in students arrested, issued summonses, and handcuffed in school. In that data, we see that Black and Latino youth represent 68 percent of the DOE’s student population, but account for 93 percent of all police interactions in schools. Of the 321 arrests and 487 handcuffing events in the second quarter of 2016, students as young as nine were arrested in school, and students as young as 7 were restrained. Racial disparities are mirrored in reported suspensions across New York City public schools, where Black students represented 53 percent of the 44,636 suspensions in school year 2014-2015, while representing 26 percent of the student population. Although school staff across the city regularly utilize suspension to maintain a safe learning environment and to influence future behavior, there is no systematic evidence that suspension accomplishes these goals. In such situations, lost instruction time brought on by classroom removals and suspensions can accumulate, making it harder for students to keep up with their peers in coursework and contributing to students’ disengagement from schooling.

In an increasing number of schools, educators and communities are working to implement evidence-based strategies, like restorative justice, that reduce the demand for exclusionary discipline and police intervention. Restorative practices have the capacity to transform the culture of discipline in NYC schools from one of exclusion to one focused on valuing learning diversity and meeting the needs of youth. It is our hope that the Council continue dialogue with the DOE on the value of sustainable investment in restorative justice in schools and ending disparities in school pushout.

### **Recommendations**

#### ***Provide High-Quality, Targeted Professional Development***

We support investments that increase professional development that will empower educators to take on the responsibility of creating affirming environments for all students, as we believe that inclusive classrooms play a role in reducing school conflict. Effectively addressing the issue of discrimination and bias in schools requires knowledgeable educators who are able to assess what social identity based harassment is, understand how their schools privilege some identities over others, and intervene in the daily harassment experienced by students.

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<sup>9</sup> New York City Department of Education. (2015). Citywide Behavioral Expectations to Support Student Learning: Student Intervention and Discipline Code and Bill of Student Rights and Responsibilities, K-12. New York, NY: Author. Retrieved from <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/CD69C859-524C-43E1-AF25-C49543974BBF/0/DiscCodebookletApril2015FINAL.pdf>.

To improve the effectiveness of anti-bullying, non-discrimination and other school policies intended to maintain schools as safe and supportive of all students, schools can create ongoing initiatives to assess whether policy implementation is equitable and aligns with their intended purposes. While a school may develop a strong “anti-bullying” policy intended to prevent bullying by sanctioning “bullies,” its policy may inadvertently lead to the use of its corresponding discipline policy to sanction students who defend themselves against ongoing harassment. Disproportionate discipline and related differential treatment may be the result of school staff or teachers who are untrained, ill-equipped, or unavailable to appropriately address bullying and harassment.<sup>10</sup> Studies show that without staff development, teacher responses to school policies in support of vulnerable students and understanding of their obligation to enforcement of these policies varies based upon their own personal history and beliefs.<sup>11</sup> Through recognition, prevention, and intervention schools can become safer, more supportive, more equitable, and, ultimately more engaging spaces for all.

### ***Invest in Restorative Responses to Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination***

Particularly in light of the disproportionate impact that severe disciplinary actions have on students of color, students with disabilities, and LGBTQ/GNC students, we strongly oppose anti-discrimination policies and trainings that emphasize increased punishment and criminal sanctions as the remedy for bias-based harassment. We believe that disciplinary responses to bias-based incidents in school must address the root causes of discriminatory incidents.<sup>12</sup> All too often, zero-tolerance policies mean student misbehavior is met with exclusionary discipline with little to no time dedicated to working with the student to help them understand the harm and the impact of their actions on others.

Research demonstrates that students experiencing bullying feel safest when teacher-student relationships are strongest.<sup>13</sup> Restorative justice as an approach to improving the learning environment and student behavior is based on three core principles: repairing harm, involving stakeholders, and transforming community relationships.<sup>14</sup> Restorative practices are predicated on the positive relationships that students and adults have with one another.<sup>15</sup> According to a resource put together by the Dignity Act Task Force, “Understanding discipline as a “teachable moment” is fundamental to a positive approach to discipline.”<sup>16</sup> A whole-school approach to restorative justice is designed to promote a sense of belonging, to cultivate awareness and consideration of others, and to ensure respectful democratic participation of all members of the community.<sup>17</sup> Building a strong community for all school stakeholders requires more than temporary offerings of professional development for individual school staff, and is key to fostering a sense of connectedness among students and promoting actual and perceived safety in schools. More systemic, high quality supports with an intentional focus on relationships and early intervention would produce better and more equitable outcomes than exclusionary discipline practices and policies like suspensions, and in-school summonses and arrests. We are hopeful that the Council will continue to join us in calling for a long term, strategic approach to coordinated and resourced restorative justice implementation in NYC schools.

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<sup>10</sup> Snapp, S.D., and Russell, S.T. (2016). Discipline Disparities for LGBTQ Youth: Challenges that Perpetuate Disparities and Strategies to Overcome Them. In R.J. Skiba, K. Mediratta, and M.K. Rausch (Eds.), *Inequality in School Discipline* (pp. 207-223). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>11</sup> Anagnostopoulos, D., Buchanan, N., Pereira, C. and Lichty, L.F. (2009). School Staff Responses to Gender-Based Bullying as Moral Interpretation: An Exploratory Study. *Educational Policy*, 23(4):519-553.

<sup>12</sup> Walton, G. (2005). “Bullying widespread:” A critical analysis of research and public discourse on bullying. *Journal of School Violence*, 4, 91–118.

<sup>13</sup> Losen, D.J., and Haynes, L. (2016). Eliminating Excessive and Disparate School Discipline: A Review of Research and Policy Reform. In R.J. Skiba et al. (eds.), *Inequality in School Discipline*. Bloomington, IN: The Equity Project, Indiana University.

<sup>14</sup> Macready, T. (2009). Learning social responsibility in schools: A restorative practice. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 25, 211-220.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, D., Fisher, D., and Frey, N. (2015). *Better than Carrots or Sticks: Restorative Practices for Positive Classroom Management*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

<sup>16</sup> Dignity Act Task Force. (2012). *Op. Cit.*

<sup>17</sup> Boyes-Watson, C. & Pranis, K. (2015). *Circle Forward: Building a Restorative School Community*. St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press.

## **Conclusion**

We encourage the city to move toward preventative, proactive solutions to bullying, harassment, and discrimination that focus on improving school culture and climate and limit surveillance, policing, and the criminalization of student behavior. Behavior management is ineffective if it is done without also coming to understand how the school culture is contributing to students' definitions of normal ways to interact with their peers.<sup>18</sup> To avoid endlessly removing students from the classroom environment for bullying, schools must seek long-term solutions, including educational approaches, to creating safer school environments.<sup>19</sup>

We are grateful to the Council, the Administration and the Department of Education for their commitment to decreasing the issuance of suspensions, arrests and summonses in New York City public schools. However, more work must be done to eradicate the disproportionate impact of exclusionary discipline on students of color and students with disabilities. Through increased transparency, solution-oriented collaboration and the targeted provision of services and supports to our schools, we can ensure all students can access the respectful and inclusive learning environments they need to experience a meaningful education.

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<sup>18</sup> Walton, G. (2005). *Op. Cit.*

<sup>19</sup> Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Make the Road New York, and New York Civil Liberties Union. (2009). *Safety with Dignity: Alternatives to the Overpolicing of Schools*. New York, NY: Authors. Retrieved from [http://www.nyclu.org/files/Safety\\_with\\_Dignity.pdf](http://www.nyclu.org/files/Safety_with_Dignity.pdf). See also Steinberg, M.P., Allensworth, E., and Johnson, D.W. (2011). *Student and Teacher Safety in Chicago Public Schools: The Roles of Community Context and School Social Organization*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Urban Education Institute. Retrieved from [http://consortium.uchicago.edu/downloads/8499safety\\_in\\_cps.pdf](http://consortium.uchicago.edu/downloads/8499safety_in_cps.pdf).

Testimony of LSNYC on Oversight - Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination in NYC Schools  
– Protecting LGBT and Other Vulnerable Students

Presented before:  
The New York City Council  
Committee on Education

Presented by:  
Jose Abrigo and Amy Leipziger  
Senior Staff Attorney  
October 19, 2016

FOR THE RECORD

**Introduction**

Legal Services NYC is the largest non-profit provider of free civil legal services in New York City. We are dedicated to expanding the rights of low-income New Yorkers in areas such as housing, family, consumer, domestic violence, foreclosure, immigration, disability and education. With offices in all five boroughs, our work is designed to improve the lives of our diverse client populations through a holistic combination of individual legal advocacy and social work support, group action, policy work and community outreach.

Through our local offices, Legal Services NYC assists hundreds of families every year with education matters. Over 80% of our student clients are children of color and/or immigrants, ranging in age from 3 to 21.

Our Education advocates assist New York City public school students and their families in a range of areas including disability accommodations, special education, student discipline, transportation, school transfers, academic intervention issues and Social Security benefits.

Our LGBT advocates assist NYC students in areas including name change, access to benefits, homeless shelter and supportive housing advocacy for homeless LGBTQ students, and fighting LGBTQ/gender expression discrimination.

Together the Education and LGBT advocates are working to reverse the effects of bullying on children and youth in our schools.

We thank the Council for holding this hearing and providing the public an opportunity to participate and testify about bullying, harassment, and discrimination in NYC Schools.

**Scope of the Problem;**

LSNYC earlier this year published a report on the legal needs of low-income LGBT People. The report is a compilation of interviews we conducted with organizations working directly with low-income LGBT people, survey responses of low-income New Yorkers, focus groups of survey participants, and an analysis of the research. A section of the report focused on the needs of LGBTQ students.

The report found that school presents serious challenges for low-income LGBT students. LGBT youth and their advocates report widespread discrimination and harassment.

According to a statewide survey conducted by the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network,<sup>1</sup> most LGBT students in New York reported being victimized in school and the majority of these incidents were not reported to adult authorities. The 2013 survey found that 7 in 10 students experienced verbal harassment based on their sexual orientation and 5 in 10 based on the way they expressed their gender. Students also reported other forms of harassment, with 87% deliberately excluded by peers, 78% had mean rumors or lies told about them, 58% were sexually harassed; 51% experienced electronic harassment or cyberbullying and 43% had their property deliberately damaged or stolen. A survey of students found that 58% of students that were harassed or assaulted in school never reported it to school staff. And of the students that did report incidents to school authorities, only 32% said that reporting resulted in effective intervention by staff.

Further, many LGBT students find themselves the subject of unfair suspensions when they stand up to homophobic and transphobic bullies. This problem is compounded for students of color, who are already disproportionately subjected to discipline by school officials. This fact is particularly troubling because of the high rates of school harassment of LGBT youth of color, with researchers reporting that 47% of Latino, 39% of African-American, and 35% of Asian/Pacific Islander LGBT youth have experienced harassment at school.

The consequences of this homophobia and transphobia in the schools are significant. LGBT students across all incomes who experience bias often stop attending classes regularly and may drop out. LGBT students who are poor are more likely to face economic and racial disparities in the education system and lack resources to transfer to more supportive schools.

### **Client Stories**

In our work with NYC students and their families, we encounter numerous instances where students report that they have experienced harassment, or bias based bullying. While DASA and the DOE Campaign of Respect for All are important steps in curbing this discrimination, we believe there is a need for reform and oversight to ensure that they the DOE is properly implementing these programs and taking all necessary steps to help those families whose children are experiencing bullying in the schools.

Our client's stories are the most telling of how bullying continues to affect this young population., K.B. is an 11 year old boy who attends a 6<sup>th</sup> grade middle school in the Bronx. At the elementary school where he previously attended, he was often bullied. Students called him names and threatened to hurt him K.B. has been bullied by other boys at the school. One student named J. in particular would message him through social media, calling him like "dick sucker," "dick rider," "bitch," calling him a "dick head with gay hair" and threatened him, saying he "better be on guard" at school, and that he would "fuck him up." When the teacher and principal approached J. regarding the behavior at school and home towards K.B., J. responded "I don't care, I will still hit him." Last year, J hit K.B. so hard in the head that he had to go to the hospital and was treated for a hematoma. One of his teachers witnessed the incident, and when K.B.

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<sup>1</sup> GLSEN is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. See <http://www.glsen.org/>

brought it up, the teacher responded by saying “don’t come crying to me because I am not going to help you.” When J.O.’s parent, Ms. O. went to the school to try to help her son she was never given copies of an incident report or any witness statements for this incident.

This year, J. has continued to tease, taunt, and harass J.O. and often cyberbullies him as well. When Ms. O, the parent learned that her son, and his bully, would be assigned to the same middle school, she requested a transfer but was denied. Following the earlier incident, there was a huge change in J.O.’s attitude at home and at school. His classwork was affected, he has been depressed and unhappy and lashing out at his family. He said he wanted to lift weights to get strong and he has verbalized that he wants to die.

Another young girl, 11 years old and in special education, was continually intimidated and harassed by a boy in her class. He stalked, verbally assaulted and threatened her with physical violence for years but the school continually failed to take any action against him or to protect her from the behavior. Her mother repeatedly notified the school, often in writing, of these incidents and asked for relief for her child. She also sent a complaint via email to the Dignity for All office but the behavior continued unabated. As a result, this young girl lived in constant fear and anxiety about being in school. School officials told the girl’s mother that her daughter was too sensitive to the boy’s taunts, and that the solution was for the girl to amend her own reactions, and attempt to avoid escalating the situations.

Harassment or assault like those experienced by J.O and countless other students is a common problem for low-income LGBT students. In our LGBT report, one young person described changing his clothes four different times throughout the day just to feel comfortable at home, at school, and with his peers. Other respondents reported assault, bullying, and cyberbullying. Focus group members similarly said that they had been bullied at school because they identified as LGBT.

Problems are not confined to other students. Adults who are supposed to respond appropriately when students raise allegations of bullying or harassment often engage in victim shaming. As one respondent explained, “Often times student help centers make the one seeking help feel like the problem, calling attention to what they do to provoke others into the behavior that shouldn’t be acceptable.”

Said another LGBT survey respondent, “I was put out of school for being transgender and had to finish at alternative school.” The administration claimed I was a safety issue.” Some respondents had actually been harassed or assaulted directly by school staff. It’s no wonder students often refrain from reporting problems.

Some focus group participants said that counselors are clearly uncomfortable when participants came out to them, negated their feelings relating to their identity as LGBT, or tried to change the topic. A transgender student reported that he was prevented from registering for classes after he changed his name to reflect his gender identity. School officials also told him that they would not acknowledge his identity as a male. “Because of this, my education is delayed by at least four more months.”

Further, another survey respondent said that he felt like his life was threatened by a bully, but when he reported it to school staff, they did nothing to resolve the problem. Another was told: “What did you expect? You’re gay—this is what you chose.”

### **Challenges with Current Legislation**

In September 2010, Governor David A. Paterson signed into law the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA). DASA, which took effect in July 2012, was designed to provide New York public school students with a safe and supportive learning environment that is free from harassment, intimidation, and bullying. DASA’s focus is on education and emphasizes the importance of creating a positive school climate. In New York City, the NYC DOE’s Respect for All program, originally implemented in 2007, was amended to comply with DASA. The goal of the program is to provide professional development for school staff, as well as direct services to student and their families who are experiencing bullying.

DASA requires annual reporting to the New York State Education Department of the material incidents of discrimination and harassment. Unfortunately, as the recent report from the Attorney General’s office found, there is a serious problem of schools underreporting incidents. For the 2013-2014 school years, the Department of Education reported that seventy percent of schools (1,257 of 1,792 schools) had zero instances in which a student was bullied, harassed, or discriminated while at school. Ninety-eight percent of those schools reported fewer than ten incidents during the same school year. There is clearly a disconnect between legislation and its implementation in schools.

We believe that one possible reason for this underreporting is confusion or misinformation as to the reporting requirements. Under the law, schools must report any violent incident with the State Violent and Disruptive Incident Reports (VADIR). This obligation includes reports of intimidation, harassment, menacing or bullying behavior. DASA however, requires that NYC schools report “material incidents of discrimination and/or harassment.” DASA is predicated on schools to self-report information and with that comes an inherent bias or subjectivity in determining which incidents to report and whether it is indicative of bias or discrimination. DASA is a more distinct, specific criteria and with it suggest an implicit bias against LGBTQ students. “Schools may be lenient in how they assess and report incidents,” the state auditors said in their report, “or they may alter the disciplinary consequences of some incident types to avoid meeting reporting criteria

Furthermore, schools do not provide specific guidance in how to respond to LGBTQ gender based bullying, and staff may not be able to see the connection between sexual harassment, gender based bullying, and those LGBTQ students who are marginalized as a result. A recent report on DASA found that teachers and administrators lacked specific information on how to implement or comply with DASA reporting requirements. In fact many schools were not aware that a dignity act coordinator was to be appointed within each school. Schools all over NYC reported that they did not receive professional development or training on LGBT

### **Proposed Solutions**

Oversight mechanisms must be enacted to ensure the NYC Department of Education enforces regulations requiring school staff to take affirmative steps when made aware of bullying or harassment and force the State Education Department to provide guidance on applying the Dignity for All Students Act to transgender youth.

Institute a uniform reporting system state wide to avoid confusion and facilitate the ease of reporting. Ensure reports can be made directly to an oversight body rather than being filtered through school administration.

An ombudsperson position should be created to take bullying complaints from parents if they feel their child's school failed to properly investigate or document the harassment and discrimination.

School administration should be trained to assess and recognize whether deficiencies in a student's school performance, attendance, discipline, or placement is the result of LGBT discrimination, racism, or another form of illegal bias.

Implement and fund data collection in order to ensure DASA's reporting requirements are being complied with. The data collection should ensure schools are not underreporting bullying incidents. The data collection should involve independently investigating all recorded incidents of disruptive behavior in a school and determine if such incidents required reporting.

Educate the entire school personnel (from the administration, to teachers, to non-educational personnel) about the requirements of the law and the parameters of behavior that require reporting. Empower all school personnel to make reports.

Students should be reassured that their reports will be kept absolutely confidential. School administration should enact policies so that no students are unintentionally outed to their families or the school, and that no actions will be taken on their report unless authorized by the student.



**Arab-American Family Support Center**  
المركز العربي الأمريكي للخدمات الاجتماعية

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October 19, 2016

### **Testimony for NYC Council Hearing on Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in NYC Schools**

Hello everyone. My name is Saif, and I am 10 years old. I go to Math and Science Exploratory School in Brooklyn. I have been going to the Arab-American Family Support Center my whole life. I attend the Youth Program, where they help me with my homework and they also take us out for trips. Now that I'm in Middle School, I'm part of the Boys Club, where we talk about bullying.

For African American, Muslim, Arab, and Hispanic communities, it's harder for us, especially Muslims. In school kids make fun of you just because of how you look, or what you wear, or how you talk, or what you believe in. I think kids bully other kids because they were bullied. I think bullying has gotten worse in the past year because of social media. There's all of these news headlines, like "Muslim man crashes plane," or "Puerto Rican guy drug theft," or "African American gun violence." These headlines separate groups of people and make them seem dangerous.

At my new school, it's not really a hating community, but at my old school, I had experiences with bullying. In my experience, a kid called me a terrorist. I think it was really because he was Puerto Rican and some kids called him mean names related to that—I think he took that out on me. When I told my teacher, she didn't help me and just sat me out. I went to my Assistant Principal and she helped me. Most of the time, it's hard to tell a teacher or a principal, but if you do, it's the right decision because they can help you.

In my experience, if someone keeps saying "Terrorist, terrorist, terrorist" in your ear, you're going to get annoyed and you're not going to focus on your school work. I think teachers should get more involved in these situations. If they see two kids arguing and they are getting really upset, teachers should say something. For the most part, teachers don't take it seriously. They just think, "Oh they're just two little kids arguing." A lot of times, teachers can't believe that a kid would bully another kid, or they think because that didn't happen in the place where they were growing up, that it can't happen.



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If students from these communities had more opportunities to share about their cultures, I think other kids would see that things aren't just like how the media says. I think kids would see we are actually the same as them. We believe different things, but inside we're all the same.

It's important to step in and stop bullying, and it's important to take claims of bullying seriously because it affects kids' schoolwork and it might hurt the kid mentally. I see in some news headlines about how kids try to commit suicide because they're being bullied in school. I don't think that's just the bully's fault. I think parents and teachers need to step in. We need to tell kids it's not okay to bully someone else just because they're different.



October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016

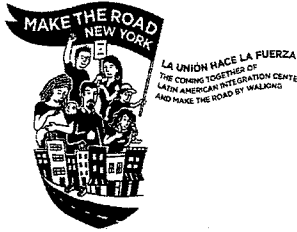
Daniel Dromm  
New York City Education Committee Chair  
250 Broadway, Suite 1826  
New York, NY 10007

**FOR THE RECORD**

Dear Chairperson Dromm,

I would like to start by recognizing and applauding the City Council for leading the effort to bring holistic approaches to school climate and moving beyond traditional approaches of creating safe and supportive school environments that too often have relied on excluding, isolating, and criminalizing young people. It is vitally important that we have a comprehensive system in place to report incidents of young people who feel bullied, being “othered,” or excluded because of their race, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual identity, disability, class, or any other identity that young people hold. The Dignity in Schools Act and reporting system should be utilized as a tool to help schools determine the positive interventions that are needed to create a welcoming environment for all young people. With the current overhaul of the State’s VADIR reporting system, we should analyze the potential changes needed, both locally and statewide in order to strengthen discrimination reporting and ensure parents, educators and students are a part of the process and understand how the system works. Reporting systems are important in creating a clear of understanding of school climate but we are concerned that calls for accountability, without a clear directive of the kind of interventions the city should embrace, could move the Department of Education to address incidents through punitive methods that do not create a welcoming and supportive school environment for the young people that feel harmed.

Research on bullying shows that an emphasis on punishment fails to build school-wide and systemic interventions to address the root causes of bullying and best strategies for improving school climates. Focusing on how to punish the person responsible for creating an unsafe environment often overlooks how environments are cultivated by school staff, the actual needs of the person who doesn’t feel safe, and that those being punished often have personal trauma that need to be addressed. Young people who identify as LGBTQ, young people who identify as Muslim, report feeling unwelcome by their schools, not always just an individual. An institutional bullying that we should come together and build holistic strategies for addressing.



A new report from GLSEN, the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network showed that an overwhelming majority of teachers want to support students that identify as LGBTQ, but half of the teachers surveyed said they haven't done anything to support LGBTQ youth. The disconnect shows that if we are truly going to create supportive school environments for all young people we have to fundamentally reprioritize building capacity in schools for safety beyond just policing and punishment. The LGBTQ Liaison created with support from the City Council begins to lay a foundation for citywide strategy but what are the other systemic solutions? Is professional development for all staff in recognizing their biases being implemented across the city? Are staff members receiving training in the best ways of teaching and affirming Trans and Gender Creative Expansive Students? How are we prioritizing Respect for All in curriculum and classrooms?

There are many unanswered questions with respect to how we are building a citywide culture in schools that ensures the dignity of all young people. We hope the council continues to lead on the critical work of reimagining building safe and supportive school environments that provide young people with the support systems they need to thrive and do not look to give up or deem any young person disposable.

Thank you,

Kesi Foster  
Director, Urban Youth Collaborative



# **SOUTH BRONX COMMUNITY**

**CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL**

**South Bronx Community Charter High School  
Harvey Chism, Executive Director  
Testimony Presented to the New York City Council Education Committee**

**Oversight Hearing on Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in NYC Schools- Protecting LGBT and  
Other Vulnerable Students  
Wednesday, October 19, 2016**

Good afternoon, Chairperson Dromm and members of the New York City Council Committee on Education. My name is Harvey Chism and I am the Executive Director of South Bronx Community Charter High (SBC). My school is a brand new high school that has opened this year with an inaugural class of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. In my role as Executive Director, I am responsible for ensuring that both students and staff have access to the resources needed to realize our mission which is promoting student excellence through an emphasis on academic, personal and professional skills in a supportive and responsive learning environment.

South Bronx Community Charter High School serves predominantly black and Latino students from neighborhoods in and around Community School District 7. Our school model was inspired by work undertaken through the City's Young Men's Initiative to improve the educational and life outcomes of young men of color. Though this was a catalyst for our work, South Bronx Community Charter High School, along with our partnering New York City Department of Education schools namely EPIC North High School, EPIC South High School, and the Nelson Mandela School for Social Justice are co-ed learning environments. Collectively, our four schools enjoy sharing best practices and a common vision regarding student success. Jointly, we provide programming for students that have historically been marginalized and are often pushed out of school due to systemic failures and peer issues such as bullying.

Bullying of LGBTQ youth is a serious problem. According to GSLEN:

- 82% have had problems with bullying in the last year due to their sexual orientation
- 64% of these students feel unsafe at school due to their sexual orientation
- 32% did not go to school at least 1 day because of feeling unsafe

These statistics are startling for sure, but coupled with the alarming statistics about the success rates of our black and Latino young men and women, we get a very dismal picture of how LGBTQ youth of color are unsupported and underserved by our public schools.

We believe that addressing these issues is paramount to ensuring all students have the opportunity to succeed. Perhaps what is most important to note about our efforts to date, are the ways in which we have endeavored to establish and sustain a school culture and community that is inclusive, anti-oppressive, and provides students a strong sense of belonging. By design, our school model considers the intersections of race, gender and sexuality as critical lived experiences that are important parts of our students' lives. Subsequently we have put key practices into place that might have the potential to benefit other schools.

They include:

- A weekly 90 minute class reserved for critical examination, exploration, and discussion of issues of identity and expression that are important and relevant to our students. In this facilitated space, students are able to deconstruct and challenge definitions of gender and directly confront prejudices that they experience. For

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us at SBC, this space serves multiple purposes including cultivating community across a diversity of students and acknowledging the multiple identities that each of us represent.

- Professional development and training for staff on the experiences, status and needs of LGBT youth
- A commitment to restorative practices that effectively respects the integrity of the harmed, provides an opportunity for amends, and promotes learning and healing when there is a breach in community norms
- Culturally responsive educational practices that address the interests of students in the present moment and equips them with the knowledge, skills and ability to identify and fight a range of societal injustices
- Visual cues throughout our school community that feature prominent and historic LGBT individuals and activists
- Supporting the initiation and sponsorship of a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA)

My experiences as a former social studies teacher, non-profit leader, school designer and now Executive Director have collectively shown that until practices and conversations shift, schools will continue to be alienating places that marginalize entire swaths of students and perpetuate biases that hinder the full potential and individuality of all young people.

Thank you again.

## Testimony to City Council

Neil Sarkar

My name is Neil Sarkar and I am an 8th grade student at East Side Middle School, which is located in the Upper East Side. Our school has a strong Gender and Sexuality Alliance where we actively partake on fundraisers, raise money in the annual AIDS walk, as well as encourage a safe environment in the school. I, along with other members of the Manhattan Leadership Council, which is a group of student leaders in the District 2 school locality, have written a bill which states that all publicly funded middle schools in the city be required to have a Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA).

We hope that this bill passes through the City Council and becomes law by the start of the next school year, September 2017. On October 7th, 2016, we met with Borough President Gale Brewer to present our idea. Ms. Brewer has expressed her support for the bill and promised to give us feedback on it.

Our goal is to eliminate discrimination and harassment towards Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Asexual, and Pansexual students. We want students to have a place where they are able to express and discuss their gender identity and sexual orientation freely. As well as raising awareness and spreading the ideas of accepting differences amongst gender expression, identity, and sexuality. A GSA may encompass a restorative justice circle and a safe space program. A safe space is an area where all students can fully express accounts of harassment concerning biological sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, cultural background, religious affiliation, age, or physical or mental state without feeling unwelcome, uncomfortable, or unsafe. A restorative justice circle is where students and the instructor gather to gain trust amongst themselves and discuss about their sexuality, gender identity, race, etc. We understand that there will be some controversy related to requiring a GSA however we want to stress that joining your school's GSA is optional, not mandatory.

GSAs should be implemented in all city funded schools because research has shown that such a club improves grades, increases attendance, and leads to less cases of harassment and bullying. For example, an investigation by GLSEN found that schools that without a GSA reported that 66.5% of students felt unsafe about their sexual orientation, compared to school with a GSA which reported 54.3% of students felt unsafe about their sexual orientation. Furthermore, GLSEN found that 43.2% of student in a school that did not have a GSA felt unsafe because of their gender expression in comparison to 35.7% of students that felt unsafe because of their gender expression in a school with a GSA. In schools with a GSA, GLSEN reported a decrease of 7.9% of students missing at least one day in school in a month. When students feel safer and more comfortable in their academic environment, they are able to better absorb the teachings, and are less likely to be absent due to fear of harassment and bullying.

GSAs make a profound impact on students and can lower the number of cases of bullying, harassment and discrimination in NYC schools. We need to protect LGBTQ+ youth and other vulnerable students and I firmly believe that establishing a GSA will help to stop homophobia. Thank you for your time! We hope that you will take our idea into consideration.

I appreciate you for reading this and thank you for letting me speak at the hearing!

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Thanks,  
Neil Sarkar

City Council and members of the public,

My name is Katerina Corr and I am a representative for my school in Manhattan.

As New Yorkers we pride ourselves in our diversity. Many people say that you can come to New York and find every type of person, and in many ways that applies to our schools too. Each and every student in a New York City public school should be entitled not only to a substantial education but to a place where they feel safe and protected. In order to do this, it is extremely important to establish a place where students can express their gender or sexuality without feeling persecuted. As a student I would want to go to a school where I feel safe, and accepted and with a group like this we can make a step to all schools having that quality. These qualities are the prime focus of the Manhattan Leadership Council. This is a council comprised of middle school students representing their schools and its interests, while also determining an initiative that we should follow. This year it was acceptance. As a representative, we think that having your fellow peers in a group rather than a guidance counselor would be much more effective in providing each student a personal approach to their situation. Although guidance counselors can be helpful, as a student I would feel much more comfortable talking to people I know have similar experiences, or have specific training. A Gender-Sexuality Alliance would create a safe space where a student regardless of their sexuality, gender, race, religion, etc. can come and receive support from fellow peers and teachers. In my school we have a Gender-Sexuality Alliance and it has been very successful. Every student knows that if they need support on this issue they can go to the meetings. In a study conducted by The American Journal of Public Health it revealed that students that were questioning or were part of the LGBTQ+ community were twice as likely to commit suicide as heterosexual students their age. But, when you want a change, you have to start talking about people as if they are people. Middle schoolers are at a very pivotal age and it is very important for students to know that they are supported. Imagine a young student who is in middle school. Now imagine that this student has come out to his family as bi-sexual. The student's parents disapprove. The student goes to tell his friends hoping that he will find support. But instead he gets bullied and has nowhere to go. Think about how this student must be thinking. Their very own parents and friends have turned on him. The student has no one to talk to and no one he can trust. Imagine not having anyone. The student decides to commit suicide. The student has left a burden, on his school, on his friends, and on his family. The student had given up. What if we could prevent this? I'm not saying that we will prevent every single LGBTQ+ youth suicide with this group but I am saying that if we can save at least one life it is worth it.

Thank you.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Katerina Corr

East Side Middle School

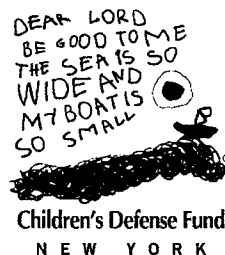
Manhattan Leadership Council

Testimony of the Children's Defense Fund – New York  
Before the Committee on Education

“Oversight - Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in NYC Schools –  
Protecting LGBT and Other Vulnerable Students”

New York City Council  
October 19, 2016

Charlotte Pope  
Youth Justice Policy Associate  
Children's Defense Fund - New York



Children's Defense Fund – New York  
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The Children's Defense Fund - New York (CDF-NY) respectfully submits the following testimony regarding "Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in NYC Schools – Protecting LGBT and Other Vulnerable Students." Thank you to Chair Dromm and to the members and staff of the City Council Committee on Education for this opportunity to testify.

The Children's Defense Fund's Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a healthy start, a head start, a fair start, a safe start and a moral start in life, and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. CDF-NY's unique approach to improving conditions for children combines research, public education, policy development, community organizing and statewide advocacy activities, making us an innovative leader for New York's children, particularly in the areas of health, education, early childhood and juvenile justice. Through CDF's Cradle to Prison Pipeline® Campaign – a national initiative to stop the funneling of thousands of children, especially poor children and children of color down life paths that often lead to arrest, conviction and incarceration – CDF-NY works to replace punitive school discipline and safety policies in New York City schools with social and emotional supports that encourage a positive school climate.

### **Overview**

CDF-NY's efforts to promote alternatives to addressing harm in schools and restrict justice system responses to student behavior gives us a unique perspective on bullying, harassment, and discrimination. Our position on punitive disciplinary practices is that they are not in the best interest of students, their safety, or their continued school engagement, and do little to get to the root of how and why students may target one another. We support holistic, restorative solutions to bullying, harassment, and discrimination that include a focus on school culture and climate, professional development of educators, preventative education, and public reporting.

We understand that this oversight hearing intends to seek clarity on the August 2016 report of the State Attorney General addressing the reporting of bullying incidents as mandated by the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA). The study found that about 71% of schools did not report any incidents of bullying for the year 2013-2014, suggesting "both substantial underreporting of material incidents of harassment and discrimination by schools in New York State, along with a significant level of confusion or uncertainty as to how to classify those incidents that are reported."<sup>1</sup> Our testimony focuses on the intent of incident reporting – to foster schools that preserve the dignity of students – and asks to what end reporting should be prioritized in reaching that goal. A proactive plan for creating welcoming, restorative school cultures is one that extends beyond counting or eliminating overt acts of harm, and addresses the role of school culture in discouraging or disincentivizing bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

### **Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination**

We recognize that the dominant understanding of bullying does not acknowledge how societal power relations, including oppression based on race, class, age, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and so on, enter the learning environment and support acts of bullying, and we argue that the problem of bullying extends beyond overt, reportable harassing behavior. To achieve sustainable change, school interventions must take on the task of shifting cultural norms alongside any bullying intervention efforts.

### ***Reporting as a Priority***

Conversations about creating safe schools are often narrowly focused on eliminating individual acts of bullying and harassment that target vulnerable populations. The success of school interventions is typically evaluated by measuring the frequency of reported bullying behaviors or student perceptions of safety even though the reduction of bullying is a measurable outcome that merely regulates violence

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<sup>1</sup> Rider, L. R., and Rosado, L.M. (2016). Re: Dignity for All Students Act: Results of Statewide School District Survey and Guidance on Implementation. New York: New York State Education Department and New York State Office of the Attorney General. Retrieved from [https://ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/dasa\\_-\\_dear\\_colleague\\_letter\\_oag-sed\\_guidance\\_document.pdf](https://ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/dasa_-_dear_colleague_letter_oag-sed_guidance_document.pdf).

rather than addresses it.<sup>2</sup> When we rely on reporting as an indicator of a safe or inclusive school, we fail to account for the diversity of ways bullying, harassment, and discrimination presents themselves in schools, including: discipline practices that punish or exclude; inadequate curriculum and low expectations for students; a lack of community participation in school decision-making; a shortage in appropriate support such as guidance counselors or social workers; and a reliance on law enforcement tactics to control student behavior.

When searching for solutions to the problem of creating supportive environments for young people, conversations typically fixate on interventions that claim to be able to eliminate bullying in school settings. Public discourse about bullying implies that it is something that can be always be seen, analyzed, reported, and ultimately eliminated.<sup>3</sup> Focusing safe schools efforts on the elimination of recognizable violence means all attention is being paid to individuals and their behavior, and none to the cultural systems that reproduce and permit violence, intimidation, or harassment. Strict attention to statistics and measurable events fails to question why the same groups of students are continually targeted for bullying, harassment, and discrimination. We call on the City to call systemic bullying, including but not limited to the conditions listed above, into question, and invest in whole-school interventions that get to the root of harm.

### **The New York State Dignity for All Students Act (DASA)**

DASA reporting follows two sets of procedures. First, schools are responsible for establishing an accessible system for any member of the school community to report incidents of bullying, harassment, and discrimination, and all school employees must be educated about their obligation to report all known or suspected incidents. Second, school districts are required to compile all incidents relevant to DASA and submit annual reports to the New York State Education Department (NYSED). The purpose of this reporting is not intended to be punitive, but rather to assist NYSED and school districts track patterns of violence and bias. Ideally, this data could assist NYSED and other agencies make decisions about where to target resources and how to design effective, relevant educational interventions.<sup>4</sup>

According to research done by the *Queering Education Research Institute (QuERI)*, teacher-reporters do not know what is reportable and have no clear definitions of “an incident based on gender” or race, or any other category.<sup>5</sup> Unless a verbal slur related to the category was used and witnessed, determining a category of offense often requires an in-depth understanding of the social dynamics within the school - a skill that is not prioritized in DASA teacher trainings.<sup>6</sup> QuERI also argues that schools have no incentive to report accurately, and ultimately reporting anxiety distracts from the proactive approach to bullying that was DASA’s legislative intent. It appears as if the focus has turned to record keeping and reporting rather than teaching respect, building stakeholder capacity to prevent harm from happening, and raising awareness amongst all school stakeholders.

### ***DASA in New York City***

According to a resource put together by the Dignity Act Task Force, “The Dignity Act’s underlying premise is that preventive and non-punitive intervention, in response to incidents of discrimination and/or harassment, is the best way to achieve school environments free from harassment and discrimination.”<sup>7</sup> The word “bullying” does not appear in DASA; rather, bullying behavior is a manifestation of the larger problems of discrimination and harassment that DASA seeks to prevent and prohibit.<sup>8</sup> Importantly, the

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<sup>2</sup> Walton, G. (2005). “Bullying widespread:” A critical analysis of research and public discourse on bullying. *Journal of School Violence*, 4, 91–118.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Dignity Act Task Force. (2012). *The New York State Dignity for All Students Act (Dignity Act): A Resource and Promising Practices Guide for School Administrators and Faculty*. New York: New York State Education Department. Retrieved from [http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/documents/Dignity\\_For\\_All\\_Students\\_Act\\_Guidance.pdf](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/documents/Dignity_For_All_Students_Act_Guidance.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Payne, E., and Smith, M. (2015). *Implementing Dignity: New York State’s Dignity for All Students Act, Research and Recommendations*. New York: The Queering Education Research Institute.

<sup>6</sup> Payne, E., and Smith, M. (2015). *Op. Cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Dignity Act Task Force. (2012). *Op. Cit.*

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Dignity Act addresses material incidents of harassment and discrimination of students by students, as well as of students *by faculty or staff*. However, here in New York City, the current Citywide Discipline Code only mentions “student-to-student bullying and/or bias-based behavior” and states, “Any student who believes that he/she has been the victim of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying by another student should report the incident to the RFA [Respect for All] liaison(s) or to any other school employee.”<sup>9</sup> There is an important disconnect between local and state framing of bullying even as DASA makes it the official policy of New York State that all students in public schools have the right to an education free of discrimination and harassment, and that includes the discrimination and harassment school staff engage in.

### **Rethinking Bullying**

A discourse of bullying that focuses on the individual characteristics of “bullies” and “victims” neglects research that examines issues of hostile school culture, the attitudes and training of school professionals, and the ways implementation of state anti-bullying legislation has failed to give districts and schools the needed tools for success. We must think more complexly about what we can and should do to address harm that happens in schools.

In order to prevent and respond to the many ways bullying, harassment, and discrimination show up in schools, we believe that there needs to be a coordinated approach that incorporates structural changes, policy reforms, and intensive, restorative supports. This September, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) released data, pursuant to the Student Safety Act amendments passed last year, illustrating the need for the City to address significant racial disparities in students arrested, issued summonses, and handcuffed in school. In that data, we see that Black and Latino youth represent 68 percent of the DOE’s student population, but account for 93 percent of all police interactions in schools. Of the 321 arrests and 487 handcuffing events in the second quarter of 2016, students as young as nine were arrested in school, and students as young as 7 were restrained. Racial disparities are mirrored in reported suspensions across New York City public schools, where Black students represented 53 percent of the 44,636 suspensions in school year 2014-2015, while representing 26 percent of the student population. Although school staff across the city regularly utilize suspension to maintain a safe learning environment and to influence future behavior, there is no systematic evidence that suspension accomplishes these goals. In such situations, lost instruction time brought on by classroom removals and suspensions can accumulate, making it harder for students to keep up with their peers in coursework and contributing to students’ disengagement from schooling.

In an increasing number of schools, educators and communities are working to implement evidence-based strategies, like restorative justice, that reduce the demand for exclusionary discipline and police intervention. Restorative practices have the capacity to transform the culture of discipline in NYC schools from one of exclusion to one focused on valuing learning diversity and meeting the needs of youth. It is our hope that the Council continue dialogue with the DOE on the value of sustainable investment in restorative justice in schools and ending disparities in school pushout.

### **Recommendations**

#### ***Provide High-Quality, Targeted Professional Development***

We support investments that increase professional development that will empower educators to take on the responsibility of creating affirming environments for all students, as we believe that inclusive classrooms play a role in reducing school conflict. Effectively addressing the issue of discrimination and bias in schools requires knowledgeable educators who are able to assess what social identity based harassment is, understand how their schools privilege some identities over others, and intervene in the daily harassment experienced by students.

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<sup>9</sup> New York City Department of Education. (2015). Citywide Behavioral Expectations to Support Student Learning: Student Intervention and Discipline Code and Bill of Student Rights and Responsibilities, K-12. New York, NY: Author. Retrieved from <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/CD69C859-524C-43E1-AF25-C49543974BBF/0/DiscCodebookletApril2015FINAL.pdf>.

To improve the effectiveness of anti-bullying, non-discrimination and other school policies intended to maintain schools as safe and supportive of all students, schools can create ongoing initiatives to assess whether policy implementation is equitable and aligns with their intended purposes. While a school may develop a strong “anti-bullying” policy intended to prevent bullying by sanctioning “bullies,” its policy may inadvertently lead to the use of its corresponding discipline policy to sanction students who defend themselves against ongoing harassment. Disproportionate discipline and related differential treatment may be the result of school staff or teachers who are untrained, ill-equipped, or unavailable to appropriately address bullying and harassment.<sup>10</sup> Studies show that without staff development, teacher responses to school policies in support of vulnerable students and understanding of their obligation to enforcement of these policies varies based upon their own personal history and beliefs.<sup>11</sup> Through recognition, prevention, and intervention schools can become safer, more supportive, more equitable, and, ultimately more engaging spaces for all.

### ***Invest in Restorative Responses to Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination***

Particularly in light of the disproportionate impact that severe disciplinary actions have on students of color, students with disabilities, and LGBTQ/GNC students, we strongly oppose anti-discrimination policies and trainings that emphasize increased punishment and criminal sanctions as the remedy for bias-based harassment. We believe that disciplinary responses to bias-based incidents in school must address the root causes of discriminatory incidents.<sup>12</sup> All too often, zero-tolerance policies mean student misbehavior is met with exclusionary discipline with little to no time dedicated to working with the student to help them understand the harm and the impact of their actions on others.

Research demonstrates that students experiencing bullying feel safest when teacher-student relationships are strongest.<sup>13</sup> Restorative justice as an approach to improving the learning environment and student behavior is based on three core principles: repairing harm, involving stakeholders, and transforming community relationships.<sup>14</sup> Restorative practices are predicated on the positive relationships that students and adults have with one another.<sup>15</sup> According to a resource put together by the Dignity Act Task Force, “Understanding discipline as a “teachable moment” is fundamental to a positive approach to discipline.”<sup>16</sup> A whole-school approach to restorative justice is designed to promote a sense of belonging, to cultivate awareness and consideration of others, and to ensure respectful democratic participation of all members of the community.<sup>17</sup> Building a strong community for all school stakeholders requires more than temporary offerings of professional development for individual school staff, and is key to fostering a sense of connectedness among students and promoting actual and perceived safety in schools. More systemic, high quality supports with an intentional focus on relationships and early intervention would produce better and more equitable outcomes than exclusionary discipline practices and policies like suspensions, and in-school summonses and arrests. We are hopeful that the Council will continue to join us in calling for a long term, strategic approach to coordinated and resourced restorative justice implementation in NYC schools.

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<sup>10</sup> Snapp, S.D., and Russell, S.T. (2016). Discipline Disparities for LGBTQ Youth: Challenges that Perpetuate Disparities and Strategies to Overcome Them. In R.J. Skiba, K. Mediratta, and M.K. Rausch (Eds.), *Inequality in School Discipline* (pp. 207-223). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>11</sup> Anagnostopoulos, D., Buchanan, N., Pereira, C. and Lichty, L.F. (2009). School Staff Responses to Gender-Based Bullying as Moral Interpretation: An Exploratory Study. *Educational Policy*, 23(4):519-553.

<sup>12</sup> Walton, G. (2005). “Bullying widespread:” A critical analysis of research and public discourse on bullying. *Journal of School Violence*, 4, 91–118.

<sup>13</sup> Losen, D.J., and Haynes, L. (2016). Eliminating Excessive and Disparate School Discipline: A Review of Research and Policy Reform. In R.J. Skiba et al. (eds.), *Inequality in School Discipline*. Bloomington, IN: The Equity Project, Indiana University.

<sup>14</sup> Macready, T. (2009). Learning social responsibility in schools: A restorative practice. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 25, 211-220.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, D., Fisher, D., and Frey, N. (2015). *Better than Carrots or Sticks: Restorative Practices for Positive Classroom Management*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

<sup>16</sup> Dignity Act Task Force. (2012). *Op. Cit.*

<sup>17</sup> Boyes-Watson, C. & Pranis, K. (2015). *Circle Forward: Building a Restorative School Community*. St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press.

## **Conclusion**

We encourage the city to move toward preventative, proactive solutions to bullying, harassment, and discrimination that focus on improving school culture and climate and limit surveillance, policing, and the criminalization of student behavior. Behavior management is ineffective if it is done without also coming to understand how the school culture is contributing to students' definitions of normal ways to interact with their peers.<sup>18</sup> To avoid endlessly removing students from the classroom environment for bullying, schools must seek long-term solutions, including educational approaches, to creating safer school environments.<sup>19</sup>

We are grateful to the Council, the Administration and the Department of Education for their commitment to decreasing the issuance of suspensions, arrests and summonses in New York City public schools. However, more work must be done to eradicate the disproportionate impact of exclusionary discipline on students of color and students with disabilities. Through increased transparency, solution-oriented collaboration and the targeted provision of services and supports to our schools, we can ensure all students can access the respectful and inclusive learning environments they need to experience a meaningful education.

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<sup>18</sup> Walton, G. (2005). *Op. Cit.*

<sup>19</sup> Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Make the Road New York, and New York Civil Liberties Union. (2009). *Safety with Dignity: Alternatives to the Overpolicing of Schools*. New York, NY: Authors. Retrieved from [http://www.nyclu.org/files/Safety\\_with\\_Dignity.pdf](http://www.nyclu.org/files/Safety_with_Dignity.pdf). See also Steinberg, M.P., Allensworth, E., and Johnson, D.W. (2011). *Student and Teacher Safety in Chicago Public Schools: The Roles of Community Context and School Social Organization*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Urban Education Institute. Retrieved from [http://consortium.uchicago.edu/downloads/8499safety\\_in\\_cps.pdf](http://consortium.uchicago.edu/downloads/8499safety_in_cps.pdf).



**HETRICK-MARTIN INSTITUTE**  
EMPOWERMENT, EDUCATION & ADVOCACY FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

**Testimony Prepared for the New York City Council's Education Committee  
on Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in New York City Schools**

**Presented by:**

**Lillian Rivera, MPH**

**Director of Advocacy & Capacity Building, Hetrick-Martin Institute**

**Wednesday, October 19, 2016**

My name is Lillian Rivera and I am the Director of Advocacy and Capacity Building at the Hetrick-Martin Institute (HMI), the nation's largest and oldest lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth serving organization. I thank the chair and the committee for their keen leadership in moving towards addressing the issues impacting climate within New York City schools. My comments this afternoon will focus on LGBTQ youth and the context of the larger system where bullying, harassment and discrimination remain a persistent challenge and life threatening crisis for many LGBTQ youth.

All young people deserve an education. All young people deserve to receive their education in an environment that is safe, supportive and nurturing. The Department of Education strives to provide this to the 1.1 million students every day. Good intentions are not enough and our students deserve equity – a safe and supportive environment in which to learn, grow and thrive. We realize that systems do not change overnight. They change with diligent commitment and resources aimed at the change. We recognize the efforts already made in addressing the all too real unsafe environments still existing for LGBTQ youth with the great strides forward made case in point, the hiring of Jared Fox as the



## **HETRICK-MARTIN INSTITUTE**

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**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Community Liaison.** In the last year, with his partnership, HMI has successfully worked alongside him and other staff of the Department of Education to develop and implement an innovative training which supports the expansion of skills that school leaders need to create safe and supportive environments for transgender and gender liberated students.

The training thus far has been well received and we have been able to reach 70 school leaders. But we know this is not enough. We continue this effort during this school year with an extensive training calendar and it continues to not be enough. Training alone will not shift the culture. A serious commitment from the DOE leadership with clear directives will make an impact and shift the culture. We know that the field of organizational psychology has taught us that culture is set by the leadership and it is modeled through action. We also know it “starts at the top”. Our work with the DOE has taught us that not only students experience unsafe environments, but that the faculty and staff often do not feel supported in living their true identity. It has been often expressed to HMI leadership and staff that teachers and administrators within the schools and administration still do not feel safe and what is missing is a bold and emphatic statement, repeated with clarity and consistency by our chancellor and the DOE leadership that all adults such as school teachers, administrators and support personnel are as equally safe and supported as their students; that the commitment to a safer and more supportive environment extends to all of the school community – including LGBTQ school staff. If the adults in the environment



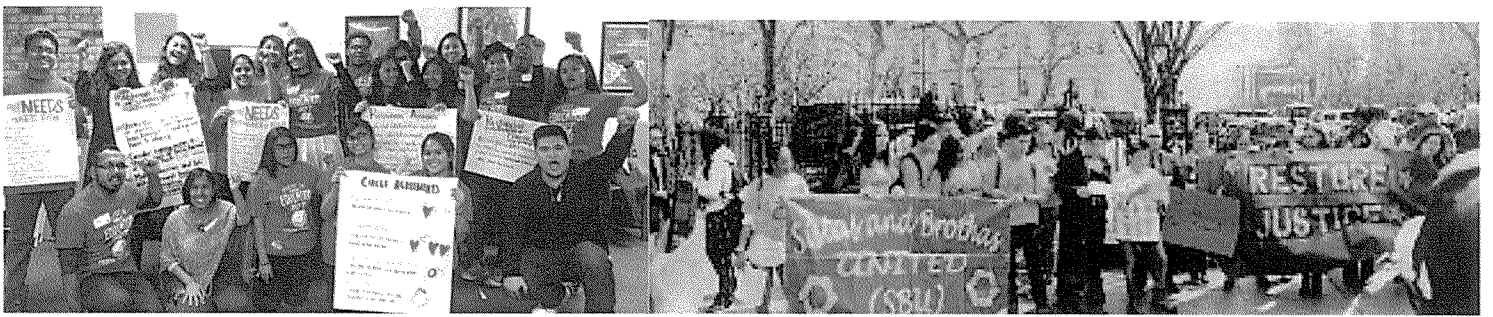
## HETRICK-MARTIN INSTITUTE

EMPOWERMENT, EDUCATION & ADVOCACY FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

cannot feel safe to be out as part of the LGBTQ community it certainly sends a clear message to the student that they are not worthy of safety. Systemic change requires shifts

within various areas of the organization and only happens when the entire system is willing to open and honestly consider where there are gaps. I implore the city council to support this growth within the Department of Education in any way you see fit because if the village cannot rally around our young people we will continue to witness the disparities in educational outcomes, health disparities and overall community well-being. I believe we have the capacity to do better, now we need the commitment and actions that prove we are willing to do better. We ask for continuing dialogue, intentional and empathic exclamations from our chancellor and all DOE leadership that affirms the safety of entire school communities – students and adults alike – and we ask that this happen with open dialogue between our chancellor and LGBTQ faculty and students who can directly inform her and the DOE leadership of effective strategies that can be employed within our esteemed institutions of learning. HMI continues to be committed to the success of every student in NYC and offer ourselves as partners to ensuring that DOE leadership also has support and guidance as the chancellor and her team continues to grow and navigate new areas ensuring LGBTQ inclusion and safety.

Thank you.



# Ending Institutionalized Bullying In Our Schools

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Statement | DRUM-Desis Rising Up & Moving and Ugnayan Youth for Justice and Social Change | October 19, 2016

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When most people hear of the term “bullying” they think about several things at once: school, a classmate, school fights, name-calling, relentless harassment, and many other unpleasant memories. However, how many people think about why the bullying behavior exists in the first place?

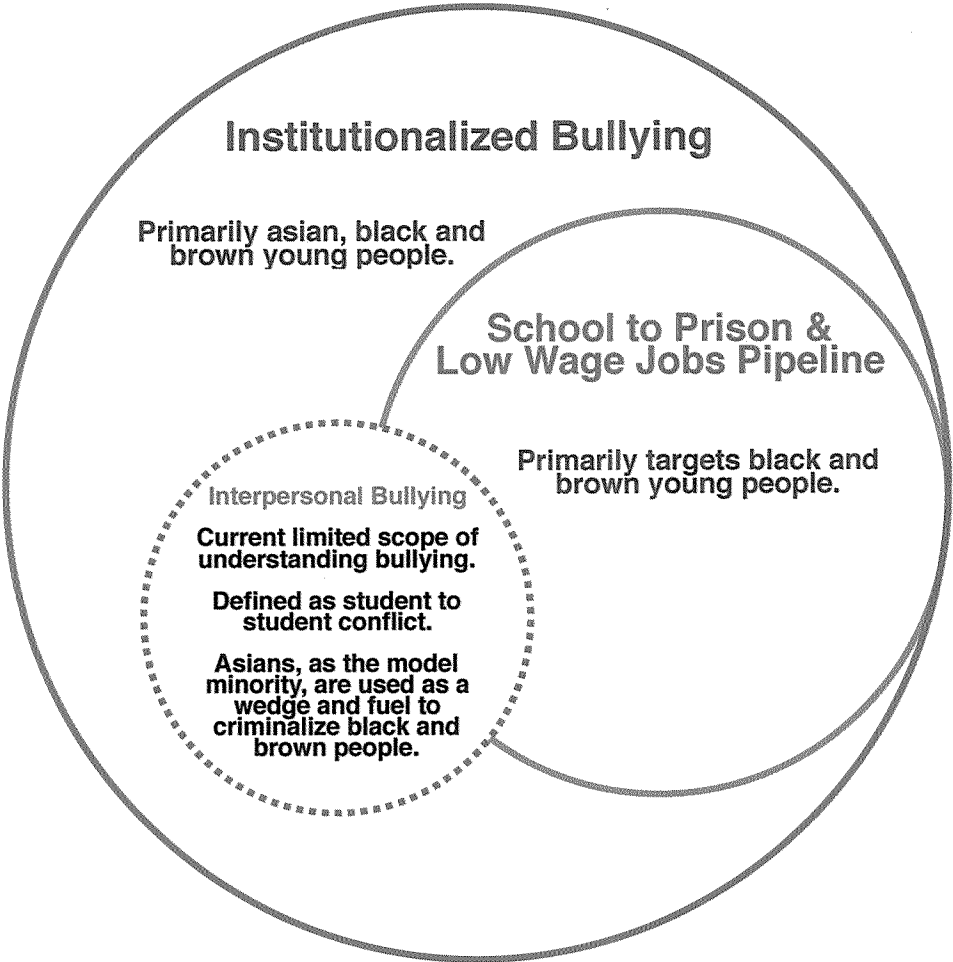
We expect our education system to develop young people as human beings, but instead we have an education system that enduringly damages young people, seeing them as needing to be controlled and dominated instead of being already fully capable and intelligent. This is called **young people’s oppression** and it’s normalized in our schools. It is young people’s oppression that upholds an environment where teachers, school staff, School Security Agents (SSAs) or NYPD officers dehumanize and harm students. When adults who are authorities in the school system enact young people’s oppression on students, we do not usually think of this as a form of bullying, but it is. Its “institutionalized” bullying because it’s embedded in the very fabric of the education system.

Institutionalized bullying affects all young people in the educational system, but it impacts students differently based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, language, and disability among other things. You may be familiar with one particularly violent way Institutionalized Bullying impacts primarily Black and Latino young people - the School-to-Prison Pipeline, and another version the School-To-Low-Wage-Jobs Pipeline. As DRUM and Ugnayan youth members, we believe that the presence of law enforcement and use of harsh Zero-Tolerance discipline policies actively promote and condone institutionalized bullying of youth of color in the NYC public schools by pushing them into the School-to-Prison-and-Low-Wage-Jobs-Pipeline.

Currently, the NYC School Discipline Code is based on Zero-Tolerance, where the root causes or the “why” behind a student’s behavior is never asked or addressed, it is simply responded to with punishment. Rather than nurturing young people to learn and grow from mistakes, youth of color are simply removed and isolated with use of harsh discipline. And yet, Zero-Tolerance discipline does not apply to adults if they bully students.

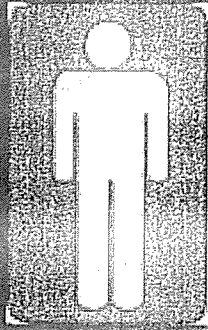
We often think of bullying as a harmful interpersonal encounter between students, and the way to reduce it is to implement more disciplinary policies. However, if we think of bullying as something that is a part of the educational system and enacted by authority figures and police officers on youth of color, the solution can’t be to implement more of the same policies that institutionalize bullying. We have to look more closely at what’s happening to our young people in the school system.

**Understanding the relationship between institutionalized bullying,  
the school-to-prison and school-low-wage pipeline:**

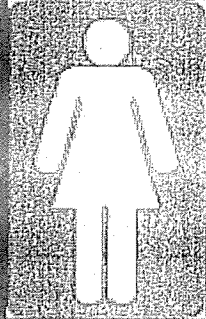


As Asian students of Filipino and South Asian descent, DRUM and Ugnayan youth understand how we're used as a wedge to criminalize Black and Latino students and push them into the School-to-Prison pipeline. Institutionalized bullying targets our Black and Latino peers in this particularly violent way; though we are reported to experience a high rate of interpersonal bullying, we are also regularly given lesser punishment than our Black and Latino kin for the same action. Asian American and Pacific Islander (API) youth experience oppressions in a different way than our Black and Latino kin. While API youth experience the highest rates of bullying in school (54% of high school youth who reported they had been bullied in NYC were Asian American, March 2014), we are conditioned to become the middle people who may be able to benefit from the status quo (the 'model minority'). API students often become a wedge used to criminalize our Black and Latino kin, divide us from them, and fuel the school-to-prison pipeline. We will not stand for this -- as Asian students, we want all bullying to end, and this cannot mean implementing policies that target and criminalize our Black and Brown peers.

We want an end to institutionalized bullying, which is toxic to all people in our education system, from teachers to students. We need to take action to undo this harmful system, and adults need to unlearn the ways they are trained to be agents of young people's oppression. The first step to doing this is ending zero tolerance policies like B21 and implementing restorative justice programs in our schools, which address and repair harm in a way that gets to the root of bullying behavior. We need to allocate resources towards these sorts of alternatives to punitive policies, and place young people at the center of their own transformation and empowerment, so they can take the lead on their development as human beings; and begin to create a model for what healthy schools and communities should be like.



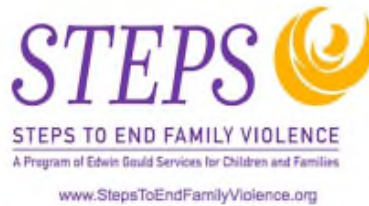
**IF YOU BELONG IN  
THIS BATHROOM**



**AND YOU FOLLOW  
MY DAUGHTER  
OR MY WIFE INTO  
THIS BATHROOM**



**YOU'RE GONNA  
NEED THIS  
BATHROOM**



NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

**Hearing on Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in NYC Schools**

Testimony Regarding:

**The Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP)**

October 17, 2016

Submitted by:

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Edwin Gould Services for Children & Families

Program Director: Connie Marquez  
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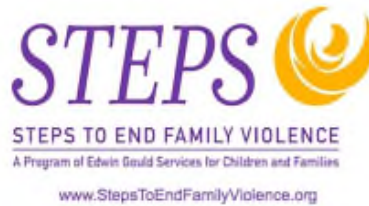
**STEPS to End Family Violence (STEPS)** respectfully submits the following testimony regarding the Teen **Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP)**.

Good afternoon, Councilmember Dromm and members of the Education Committee. I would first like to thank the Council for your unwavering support of RAPP over the past four years. Your help was critical to the restoration of RAPP each year, and of course to last year's baselining of RAPP in the Executive budget and expansion, for which we also thank the Human Resources Administration.

I am happy to submit this testimonial today to discuss the work RAPP has done recently in regards to bullying, harassment and discrimination in NYC Schools and protecting the LGBT population and other vulnerable students moving forward.

STEPS to End Family Violence has been a RAPP provider since its inception in 1999, and before that a provider of its precursor, Adopt-A-School. We have witnessed over and over again the transformational nature of RAPP; of the teens who have found safety and healing from being abused, stalked, or intimidated; who are bullied and marginalized by peers; and who come to us from homes or communities where there is violence. As some of you may know we provide therapeutic counseling, education, and support to help students affected heal and grow into healthy, confident, and productive adults. RAPP becomes part of the fabric of each of our 27 schools understanding and addressing the issues that teens identify including self-esteem, abuse, discrimination, sexual violence, gender norms, race, oppression, social media, conflict resolution, among others.

RAPP schools have dedicated Coordinators who hold Masters Degrees in Social Work who provide onsite services every day throughout the year. RAPP meets with students in classrooms, during lunch time, afterschool to both provide services and to create awareness about these issues and how to address them and promote healthy and respectful school learning environments.



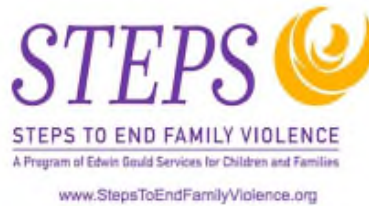
RAPP is a program that promotes self-sufficiency in every sense of the term; Our summer Peer Leaders learn the responsibility of a job, the commitment to a team, and how to manage time and money. As a measure of our success, 98% of our Peer Leaders graduated high school last year and over 90% are attending college. Those few students who chose not to attend college, are gainfully employed. We are so very proud of our young men and women who are learning the importance of healthy relating, of responsibility, higher education, and perhaps most important – self-worth.

Not only is NYC's Teen RAPP the largest primary prevention program in the US – this is a model that works and has been working for 17 years. In fact, a Columbia University report released in 2010 states the importance to urban minority youth of connectedness and engagement to success and a reduction in aggression and violence in school. RAPP provides just that connective tissue for our teens.

RAPP plays a large roll in their schools to help reduce and prevent bullying of all affected individuals particularly with LGBTQ youth. RAPP teaches inclusive language, acceptance, and safety around LGBTQ workshops that are held for students, teachers, parents, as well as the outside community. RAPP Coordinators help youth with the coming out process with their families and peers. Many RAPP Coordinators also host after school clubs that welcome students from diverse backgrounds to be leaders in their communities on issues that hit close to home for many LGBTQ youth such as teen dating violence, healthy relationships, and safe sexual practices. Lastly RAPP provides a safe and confidential space for students affected by bullying to get the counseling they need to deal with the unfair conditions and consequences of the act.

Current peer leaders involved in RAPP services have felt that its presence has been crucial to their academic success. In an article co-written by two of our Middle School Peer Leaders that was featured in the 2016 Bulletin of the **Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence**, Sara Ghonelm and Farhin Puspita wrote the following:

*“Schools often have anti-bullying programs that tell us not to bully, but they*



*don't tell us how we can stop bullying, and there are very few programs that focus on teen dating violence. Students don't want to be lectured by teachers about not bullying, because they feel that, if they are not going to be graded on something, then why care? But in reality, these are the things we have to face. No matter how friendly adults are, we still feel they are going to judge us. The next step is to get even the smallest amount of teens involved and get them to talk to each other. They will listen and most likely learn from each other. To make this possible, there should be more programs like the one at our school, Horace Greeley, the Relationship Abuse Preventions Program (RAPP). In RAPP, we learn about more than bullying and teen dating violence. RAPP provides us a place to have group discussions where we can be comfortable talking to others about our experiences. We also have guest speakers who share knowledge and advocacy, which make the discussions more interesting. Bringing awareness to people isn't easy. Adults should take any opportunity to get teenagers to talk about these issues and to promote these ideas; you never know who is going through something like this, and by just promoting these ideas and talking about how to help someone who is experiencing bullying or dating violence, you can help a lot of people in different ways."*

Prevention is pivotal in any public health issue. And the earlier we start the better. RAPP's objective is to prevent violence first and foremost. And it is clear that the continuation of this program and the integration of more programs like it are essential in addressing bullying with LGBTQ youth and other vulnerable students.

To the entire City Council, we thank you once again for your attention to this important issue and your help in ensuring that RAPP continues partnering with NYC public schools. We hope the Council will continue to take an active role in supporting this programming and, indeed, supporting its expansion throughout New York City so that we can break the cycle of abuse and lead the nation in creating a safer, greater city.

Thank you very much and we look forward to working with you.



# Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence



Winter 2016

## Featured in this issue: **TEEN DATING VIOLENCE**

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### From the Executive Director



Happy 2016 from OPDV! We hope that you all had a wonderful holiday season.

As you are planning your upcoming events, please remember that January is Stalking Awareness Month and Human Trafficking Month, and February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month.

Since the theme of this issue is teen dating violence, we have reached out to New York State teenagers to author the important insights in the pieces on the following pages. Many thanks to [STEPS to End Family Violence](#) Director of Teen Services & Strategic Partnerships Connie Márquez and her staff for helping the students in the NYC-funded [Relationship Abuse Prevention Program](#) (RAPP) program provide our feature article: "Bullying and Teen Dating Violence: Our Perspective," by RAPP leaders Sara Ghoneim and Farhin Puspita, and for assisting with our Q&A, in which students from Truman High school in the Bronx responded anonymously to a survey about their relationships and their perspectives on the nature and dynamics of intimate partner abuse.

You will notice a special insert in this issue that addresses three questions about bullying that were asked of students in which STEPS runs RAPP services; their answers provide valuable information for anyone working with youth. Although these three questions specifically address bullying behavior and the role of the active bystander (which students refer to as "Upstander"), both bullying and intimate partner violence are, at their very core, grounded in power and control, and bullying behavior among youth often segues into dating violence in adolescence and continues as domestic violence in adulthood.

We at OPDV wish you a peaceful and productive start to the New Year and look forward to our continued partnership in 2016.

*Gwen Wright*

### #ICanDoSomething Teen Video Challenge

This February, in recognition of Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month, OPDV is launching our first teen video challenge: #ICanDoSomething!

Based on [our 2015 #ICanDoSomething video campaign](#) aimed at teens, this year's challenge builds upon the theme of responding safely and responsibly to dating violence by telling others how they can create and support positive, healthy, nonviolent relationships.

While [last year's video](#) presented statistics, "red flags," and intervention strategies, our 2016 Challenge encourages all NYS teens aged 14-18 to create a 60-second video based on one of seven healthy relationship values, then upload the video to Youtube by January 31 for a chance to win amazing prizes and statewide recognition!

You can find links to the Challenge website at [www.ICanDoSomethingChallenge.com](http://www.ICanDoSomethingChallenge.com)

We'd love to see teens from *your* community represented among this year's entrants!

## NYS Domestic & Sexual Violence Hotline 1-800-942-6906

English & español, Multi-language Accessibility  
Nat'l Relay Service for Deaf or Hard of Hearing: 711  
In NYC: 311 or 1-800-621-HOPE (4673)  
TDD: 1-866-604-5350  
24/7 • CONFIDENTIAL



February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention Month

### In Our Next Issue: **Vicarious Trauma**

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. In recognition of the professionals working with survivors, children, and offenders of domestic violence, we will dedicate our spring to vicarious trauma.

### Did You Know...

In 2014, 873 family offense petitions were filed in NYS by individuals between 17-21 years of age, and 48 were filed by individuals aged 16 and under, for a total of 921 family offense petitions filed by individuals aged 21 and under.

This information was taken from the **2014 NYS Domestic Violence Dashboard**.

# Bullying and Teen Dating Violence: Our Perspective

Sara Ghoneim and Farhin Puspita, Horace Greeley Middle School, IS10, Queens, NYC

What image comes to your mind when you hear the word ‘bully’? The most typical image is of a ‘school-bully’: someone who taunts classmates inferior to them in size, strength or charisma. In reality, although this is a common scenario, it does not portray the whole picture of the infamous term “bully.” Bullying takes many forms such as physical, verbal, social, and cyber.

Anyone can fall prey to this detrimental act of terror. It is an act that is now globally acknowledged. But what use is the acknowledgement if it does not lead to a solution, or even a movement towards its eradication? We deny the existence of bullying to remain pallid and not voice our opinion on the controversial topic that brings tears to the eyes of the helpless or causes distress in the hearts of the countless who suffer in silence. So, according to our perspectives, we believe in reformation and change, and to change we must take steps to help visualize the effects of such acts of terror in the eyes of everyone.

Bullies thrive on the weaknesses of others. They have a distorted idea that if others feel powerless it will make them more powerful. Bullies crave both emotional and mental control, using fear and other tactics to help them feel superior - similar to teen dating violence, where one partner tries to gain power and control over the other using the very same tactics that are used by bullies.

In every bullying situation there is the bully and the victim. However, there is always the third participant: the bystander. The bystander participation can be either intentional or unintentional. Bystanders are often faulted for not standing up for the victims. But we understand where they are coming from because they don’t want to be the bully’s next target. People may say that bystanders can ask for help from teachers or counselors. But it doesn’t really make a difference because the bystander fears that the bully will hurt them next. From our own experiences, we have seen bullying and we wanted to stand up for the victim but were unable, due to our own fears of being the next victim. However, deep down we wanted to act to not only help the victim but ourselves too. Bystanders often don’t act, convincing themselves that it isn’t their problem or they don’t believe that their words or actions can be heard or make an actual difference; they feel powerless.

The question now is how do we empower the bystander? The answer is we need to let them know that they have the power to make significant change and that bullying is everyone’s problem. Social media has become a part of our life so why not let it work for us? Social media can be the tool to help promote anti-bullying and teen dating violence awareness and to empower bystanders to become upstanders! Teenagers can promote these ideas on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc., and everyone can inform their friends.

Schools often have anti-bullying programs that tell us not to bully, but they don’t tell us how we can stop bullying, and there are very few programs that focus on teen dating violence. Students don’t want to be lectured by teachers about not bullying, because they feel that, if they are not going to be graded on something, then why care? But in reality, these are the things we have to face. Some students will not open up to teachers due to fear of being judged for being in an unhealthy relationship, or because they feel that teachers are not taking bullying seriously enough. (“Just ignore the bully” is often suggested.)

To get the attention of teenagers, we need people from our age group, our peers. While talking to our peers, we feel connected, feeling they may go through the same thing as us. No matter how friendly adults are, we still feel they are going to judge us. The next step is to get even the smallest amount of teens involved and get them to talk to each other. They will listen and most likely learn from each other. To make this possible, there should be more programs like the one at our school, Horace Greeley, the [Relationship Abuse Preventions Program](#) (RAPP). In RAPP, we learn about more than bullying and teen dating violence. RAPP provides us a place to have group discussions where we can be comfortable talking to others about our experiences. We also have guest speakers who share knowledge and advocacy, which make the discussions more interesting. Bringing awareness to people isn’t easy. Adults should take any opportunity to get teenagers to talk about these issues and to promote these ideas; you never know who is going through something like this, and by just promoting these ideas and talking about how to help someone who is experiencing bullying or dating violence, you can help a lot of people in different ways.

In truth, bullying and teen dating violence are happening, and will continue to happen until the collective body of students, teachers, and community do something to deter its progress. It may not stop anytime soon, but remaining sedentary and pallid about it will not help either. Therefore, we must increase public awareness by encouraging more programs like RAPP, which encourage people to stand up and speak up against bullying and teen dating violence. It is easier said than done, but we have to try, because the longer we wait for someone else to do something about it, the longer this problem will remain unsolved. As the saying goes, “You can’t climb the ladder of success with your hands in your pockets!” Let’s all start climbing together.



RAPP leaders Sara Ghoneim (L) and Farhin Puspita (R) proudly display “Bullying and Teen Dating Violence: Our Perspective,” the article they co-authored for OPDV’s winter 2016 bulletin.

Sara Ghoneim and Farhin Puspita are eighth graders at The Horace Greeley Middle School, IS10, in Queens, NYC. They are student Peer Leaders in their school’s [Relationship Abuse Prevention Program](#) (RAPP), a bullying and abuse prevention program administered by [STEPS to End Family Violence](#), a program of [Edwin Gould Services for Children & Families](#). RAPP, which has been funded by New York City’s Human Resources Administration since 1999, delivers an array of services including prevention classes, intervention counseling, groups, staff development, community outreach and a summer Peer Leadership Training program.

# Special Insert: Teen Bystanders “In Their Own Words”

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), “Violence in an adolescent relationship sets the stage for problems in future relationships, including intimate partner violence and sexual violence perpetration and/or victimization throughout life.”

In an effort to provide teens with better tools and resources to support safe, trusting, healthy relationships with their peers, their intimate partners, and the adults in their lives, we looked at what they had to say about bullying, about their fears and challenges, and their needs. Below are some of their responses. We thank them for their honesty and insights.

## When have you felt empowered/safe to be an “Upstander?”

- When I had an adult or a friend I could trust
- When I told a boy to stop making fun of a kid
- When I confided in an adult in my school
- When I saw bullying going on
- When I stood up for my friends
- When my younger siblings got bullied
- Anytime I’ve known something was wrong
- When I broke up with my abusive boyfriend
- When I told a 9th-grader to stop bullying a 3rd-grader
- When my friend was called a “whore”
- In 6th grade, when my bully tried to hit me and I punched him
- Whenever I think someone is going to get hurt
- When I see peers being bullied online
- When someone else steps in first
- When I was in a support group of “no hate” and “no judgement”
- When I protested an issue I was passionate about
- When I saw someone with a disability being hurt by someone
- When I saw that someone needed me to stick up for them and I physically and emotionally connected with the victim
- When I helped a friend calm down instead of using violence

## What are the challenges of being an “Upstander”?

- Being judged
- Being neglected by others
- Telling a bully to stop
- Being bullied myself
- Telling an adult
- Being called a “teller” or snitch
- Being different
- Being seen as a “buzz kill”
- Trying to understand what’s going on; it’s difficult to understand
- Being ridiculed
- Being seen as the bully myself
- Getting knocked out
- Being punished for intervening
- Escalating the situation
- Respecting boundaries; knowing when to step up and step back
- Being told that the situation “is none of your business”
- Not being sure about what to say
- Making the problem worse
- Being smaller than the bully.
- Encouraging more conflict
- Being laughed at/made fun of
- Being seen as a coward
- Confronting the bully when he/she is my friend
- Stopping the violence when other bystanders want it to continue
- Doubting I’m doing the right thing
- Hurting someone if I have to physically intervene

## What can adults in your school do to support you and your peers?

- Explain that you shouldn’t feel unsafe to be an Upstander
- Step in if they see something bad happening, or involve more people to make sure nothing bad happens
- Separate me from bullies/punish the bullies
- Don’t accept kids with obnoxious behaviors
- Pay more attention
- Take action. No “sugar coating”
- Provide cameras to catch the bullies, or an alarm that goes off to alert the dean or principal that a bully is targeting someone
- Create a campaign to stop bullying
- Provide mediation for people with problems
- Just be there for students and listen
- Understand the dynamics of bullying
- Provide us with more programs, like cyber-bullying support groups and counseling for victims and bullies
- Support the victim, not the bully
- Encourage intellectual discussions about social issues instead of discouraging them
- Be Upstanders themselves
- Realize that “kids will be kids” does not justify bullying
- Let us have our own opinions
- Add more empowering sports and clubs

# Q&A: Teens Talk About What Dating Violence Means to Them

This Q&A shows the results of a questionnaire conducted with students (age 13-19) at Harry S. Truman High School in the Bronx. The questionnaire was developed by a RAPP Peer Leader, who is also a member of Student Council, to better understand interpersonal relationship dynamics at her school, particularly regarding emotional abuse.

**Q Do you talk to your parents about your relationships?**

**A** Of the 582 students who answered this question, 135 (36%) answered yes.

**Q Do you think jealousy is a form of abuse?**

**A** While 135 (23%) of the 587 students who answered responded that, yes, jealousy is a form of abuse, the remaining students either said that they did not believe jealousy was a form of abuse (272/46%) or they were not sure (180/31%).

**Q Do you think it's healthy if your partner is always trying to change you?**

**A** A total of 586 students answered this question, and while 49 (8%) said that yes, they did think it was healthy, 485 (83%) answered no, they did not believe it was healthy, and 52 (9%) were unsure.

**Q What do you think is the most common type of abuse: Physical, Emotional, Sexual, Verbal, or Financial?**

**A** The 568 students who responded to this question provided the following feedback:

- Physical: 168 (30%)
- Emotional: 158 (28%)
- Sexual: 67 (12%)
- Verbal: 164 (29%)
- Financial: 11 (2%)

**Q Is it fair to check your partner's phone?**

**A** The majority (255/44%) of the 585 students who answered this question responded that yes, it is fair to check their partner's phone, while 232 (40%) answered no, and 98 (17%) stated that they were unsure.

**Q Do you know where to go/who to contact to report domestic violence?**

**A** A total of 583 students answered this question, and 366 (63%) said that yes, they did know who to contact, while 131 (23%) said they did not know, and 86 (15%) said they were not sure.

According to [Day One](#) in New York City, "teaching young people about healthy relationships and ways to avoid physical dating violence can reduce physical and sexual dating violence by 60%." Since 1999, the [Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program](#) (Teen RAPP) in NYC has helped teens define and develop healthy relationships, recognize abuse and harassment, and safely help themselves and others.

Below, 68 RAPP middle and high school students share their experiences with the RAPP program, and provide valuable insight on the role that supportive programs and adults can play in addressing teen dating violence.

**Since being involved with RAPP, students reported that they knew more about:**

- Different types of relationships: 56 (82%)
- How to stay safe: 58 (85%)
- How to reach out in case they/ someone else needs help: 56 (82%)

**When asked whether they had a strong relationship with a RAPP counselor:**

- 36 (53%) students strongly agreed and 29 (43%) agreed that they had a strong relationship with a RAPP counselor

**When asked whether their participation in RAPP has helped them be more accepting/tolerant they are of other people's points of**

**view, students responded:**

- 27 (40%) students strongly agreed and 40 (59%) agreed that RAPP has helped them be more tolerant of others

**Students reported that, since being aware of RAPP services in their school:**

- They feel more comfortable in their school: 55 (81%)
- They are less likely to skip classes: 40 (59%)
- They are more involved in school: 51 (75%)
- They participate in RAPP: 58 (85%)

**When asked to share their feelings about RAPP, students responded:**

- "I am becoming a better person than I was before."

- "I am learning how to let people try and understand instead of pushing them away."
- "I feel good knowing I have someone to talk to."
- "Love RAPP!"
- "I have somewhere to go when I need help."
- "I feel more confident on what I say and how I respond as I am more informed."
- "I feel more comfortable talking with RAPP counselors."
- "I feel more able to spread awareness to others."
- "I feel more able to stand up for others when there's injustice."

# Legislative Update

The following bills have recently been signed into law:

- The housing discrimination bill prohibits discrimination in rental, lease terms, or eviction procedures based on domestic violence victim status, and establishes a task force to study the impact of gender, source of income and DV status on access to affordable housing.
- Another bill requires the [Office of Court Administration](#) to establish a pilot in several Family Courts for electronic filing of family offense petitions, and allows victims to

- request temporary orders of protection by audio-visual means.
- A new law requires police to have a victim's statement on a [Domestic Incident Report](#) (DIR) translated when the statement is not in English. Also, the [Victim Rights Notice](#), which must be given to all victims when a DIR is completed, must be translated into the most frequently spoken languages in New York State.
- The [Trafficking Victims Protection and Justice Act](#) was signed, to improve NYS's response to human trafficking. It adds new offenses and increased penalties for buyers

- and traffickers and requires the development of policies and materials for police officers to use in assisting victims.
- Finally, a new law allows the [Department of Health](#) to conduct education and outreach for consumers, patients, and health care providers on the availability of free education or counseling programs provided by not-for-profit or government agencies assisting sexual assault or child pornography victims.

Please see [website](#) for information on additional bills signed into law.

## Suzanne Cecala, Director of Public Awareness & Prevention



**I am Suzanne Cecala, Director of the new Bureau of Public Awareness & Prevention. I'm so happy that the important work of promoting public**

awareness and the prevention of domestic violence has been consolidated into one bureau under the leadership of Executive Director Gwen Wright, and I am honored to lead the charge. My bureau oversees the OPDV website, the quarterly Bulletin, public awareness campaigns like "Shine the Light," public information, the annual DV Dashboard, the Advisory Council, e-Alerts, publications, media outreach, and social media.

Prior to my 17 years at OPDV, I worked at the NYS Health Department,

promoting awareness of a multitude of health issues, such as HIV, cancer, teen pregnancy and...domestic violence. A background in marketing and design led me on this path and what has unfolded since then has been life-changing. It's both rewarding and humbling to think that I am able to make a difference in the lives of victims and survivors, family and friends. These courageous people guide my work every day and I'm proud to serve them and all New Yorkers as we work to end domestic violence.

## New York State's Response to Human Trafficking

January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month, and a time to increase our vigilance by preventing and intervening in ways that enhance the safety of victims while supporting their transition to a life of dignity and self-worth.

Human trafficking, a form of modern-day slavery, allows traffickers to profit by controlling and exploiting others.

Under US federal law, victims of human trafficking in the US include:

- Minors (under age 18) induced into commercial sex—referred to as Commercial Sexual Exploitation of

Children (CSEC)

- Adults (age 18 or over) involved in commercial sex via force, fraud, or coercion
- Children and adults forced to perform labor and/or services in conditions of involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery through force, fraud, or coercion.

For many years, the [New York State Office of Children and Family Services](#) has provided services to trafficking victims statewide, along with [specific information](#) for Child Welfare Workers on identifying, assisting, and educating potential child trafficking victims.

Nationwide, as many as 300,000 minors are trafficked, and most of them are missing from their families when exploitation occurs. In response, [Governor Cuomo](#) has established an [Interagency Task Force](#) to help New Yorkers recognize and report human trafficking, and to train law enforcement and social and human services personnel in identifying this criminal violation of human rights. Additional efforts include targeted outreach along the NYS Thruway.

Please report suspected trafficking of children and adults to the [National Human Trafficking Resource Center](#).

**NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence** [www.opdv.ny.gov](http://www.opdv.ny.gov)

Please send any comments or content ideas to: [opdvbulletin@opdv.ny.gov](mailto:opdvbulletin@opdv.ny.gov)

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Testimony of LSNYC on Oversight - Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination in NYC  
Schools – Protecting LGBT and Other Vulnerable Students

Presented before:  
The New York City Council  
Committee on Education  
October 19, 2016

Good afternoon, my name is Amy Leipziger and I am here representing the New York County Lawyers Association's Education Law Committee. Founded in 1908, the New York County Lawyers Association was the first major bar association in the country to admit members without regard to race, ethnicity, religion or gender. Since its inception, NYCLA has pioneered some of the most far-reaching and tangible reforms in American jurisprudence. On behalf of the Education Law Committee, we are pleased to have the opportunity to offer testimony on how to better protect LGBT and other vulnerable students from bullying, harassment and discrimination in NYC schools.

Recently our committee hosted a panel discussion, featuring Council Member Daniel Dromm, legislative director for Council Member Dromm's office Sebastian Maguire, NYC DOE teacher Colin Schumacher, and LGBT advocate Mohamed Amin. The event was titled "Out of the Closet and into the Schools: How the Department of Education Handles LGBT Issues."

The discussion celebrated the work of advocacy organizations like Mr. Amin's Caribbean Equality Project that is working to create safe spaces for LGBT youth who are concerned about the impact of coming out on their relationship with family and community, and the hard work of teachers like Mr. Schumacher who have created curriculums that place the civil rights struggles of the LGBT community on par with those of other minorities. The panel also discussed the challenge of how to address bias-based bullying, and how the work of creating safe spaces for both LGBT youth and educators in our schools, as well as curriculum that showcases and further normalizes and celebrates the LGBT individuals and community are just two steps on the road to combating school-based bullying

Specifically, LGBT adolescents shouldn't have to be lucky to find an organization like the Caribbean Equality Project to offer support and community. Gay-Straight Alliances, or GSAs should be the rule, not the exception, across all of New York City's public schools. Even where there is interest among students, there often isn't a staff member in the school community who feels equipped to serve as the group's advisor, or there isn't the funding available to pay for that staff member's time. Training and funding should be made available to school staff so they are supported in creating a more inclusive environment.

Creating a more inclusive environment for LGBT individuals is crucial to creating a safe and secure school climate. It means more than establishing and funding GSAs. First and

foremost, funding must go into training educators and other school-based staff in using the Dignity for All Students Act, or DASA, and also repairing communities and supporting students after bullying and harassment has taken place in the community. According to a recent survey of NYC students, only 22% attended a school with a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy that included specific protections based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression. Many educators are under the mistaken impression that to make a DASA report will somehow reflect negatively on them or their school, and they fear consequences for making these reports. Educators must know that data collection is the first step to problem solving, and it must be made clear to them that they or their school will not suffer negatively because of their honesty.

Educators must also be on the front lines of creating support amongst themselves for those who identify as LGBT and often feel incredibly closeted in their school communities. In other words, the individuals in the best positions to be proud out role models to our LGBT youth are not able to be out themselves because they fear retaliation from supervisors or being on the receiving end of bigotry by parents and other members of the school communities. The Department of Education must show leadership on this front, and make clear that this kind of discrimination and a culture of fear that closets our LGBT teachers will not be tolerated.

Creating a positive school climate also means revisiting curriculum and standards to make the stories of LGBT individuals and LGBT history a meaningful part of curriculum, and not just an afterthought or addendum. In a 2013-2104 survey from GLSEN, students in NYC schools reported that they did not have LGBT-inclusive curricular resources, with only 30% being taught positive representations of LGBT people, history, and events, and nearly half (49%) could not access information about LGBT communities on school internet. Innovative teachers are engaging their students in meaningful social justice work that does pay the same amount of attention to the civil rights struggles of the LGBT community, as our curriculums have historically given to the struggles of African Americans, immigrants, women, and other groups. But, unfortunately in this era of high stakes for students and teachers alike, it is rare that teachers feel empowered to take risks and deviate sharply from the mandates of supervisors who insist they stick closely to state standards. As more and more educators are thinking about the power and importance of culturally responsive curriculums, particularly in social studies, we must not limit ourselves to thinking about race and ethnicity, but also sexual and gender identity. We will not have schools that are safe places for our LGBT youth until our curriculums are teaching and celebrating the stories of the LGBT movement.

Individuals who identify as LGBT, or adolescents who are struggling to figure out their own sexual or gender identity, need more than access to a gender-neutral bathroom. They need to be part of supportive inclusive communities that not only condemn bullying and harassment, but also recognize and teach their students that the LGBT community, like so many communities in our world, is a community whose members have made and continue to make important contributions to society.

### **Introduction**

The bully has been a fixture in American society since our inception as a nation. He or she is found in our literature, our movies, our schools and our communities. For decades the cultural response of fathers to their sons who were victimized in this regard was to go back outside and confront the aggressor physically. We know today this doesn't work. Girls bully too and physically challenging another child is no guarantee his or her own behavior will change.

By all indicators this problem has gotten worse. The headlines nationwide are cataloguing the consequences of Bullyism from our classrooms to the Internet. Children are afraid to go to school and others are exiled socially from cruel postings on Facebook or similar sites. Much emphasis has been placed on developing new curriculum and enlisting teachers to confront the problem in the classroom. Parents are beside themselves for answers.

Curriculum and classroom activity alone has not worked and will not work. Unless there is an environment that robs the bully of an audience and eliminates the approval and anonymity in which he or she functions, all other tactical considerations will but put a dent in the problem.

Victims must have a committed, permanent forum of their peers as a bulwark to deter bullying. That is what this curriculum is designed to produce. Young people seek approval from their peers at this stage of life more than at any other time. If that approval is removed in most cases so is the negative behavior. The bully is no exception. When a powerful and positive peer group removes that approval and is no longer indifferent to the bully's machinations, the victimizer has no place to go. He or she will be reported to authority figures. Students become guardians instead of bystanders, and it is at this point that the bully becomes open to change.

Conversely, the bully is also a child in desperate need of help. Most have been abused physically and psychologically. Their behavior is consistent with what they have experienced. They are not going to change without receiving help themselves. While professional resources in a school or community center are vital in this regard, so is a forum of the bully's peers who can show empathy and support for the pain to which a bullying child has become inured.

How else can we expect a child who has been denied affection, encouragement, self worth and a loving family environment to behave? Hurting others is a way for the bully to communicate to peers how it feels to be victimized. "I did what I did to show other kids how I feel. Now you know what I've gone through" has been a common refrain heard in Council for Unity (CFU) sensitivity sessions when bully's open up about their own experiences and dark motivations. It has been the support systems of this model that have conjointly reclaimed both victim and bully alike. All children identify with anguish and pain. When opportunities for empathy arise, so do opportunities for behavior modification and common cause.

Any successful approach to this problem then must create environments that prevent bullyism. These environments must establish empowered, supervised peer groups where victims feel safe to reveal the persecutions that beset them and ultimately to create positive peer support systems for bullies to get the help they need. Unless and until this occurs in a school or community center, little else offers hope.

This is what CFU does. The results are compelling. Bullies get help and become guardians instead of victimizers. Anonymity in a building is replaced by synergy and networking. The systemic embrace of a unity strategy reflects an age old CFU dictum: "If you bring everyone together, there's no one left to fight and no one left to make fun of either." This is the thrust of the Partnerships for the Prevention of Bullyism Curriculum. It works because everything in this syllabus has been battle tested with outcomes so compelling that since 1975 CFU has planted its flag on 3 continents.

### **History**

The Council for Unity was born out of racial conflict in 1975. Its original members were gang leaders and racists. Within a year they became a band of brothers committed to perpetuating the peace they came to enjoy. The process leading to that peace resulted in a unique curriculum designed to meet the deepest needs of kids so they would be diverted from gangs and other counter culture groups. Over the course of the Council's history many of our members were or are bullies. Why they joined and are still joining CFU where such behavior is forbidden is the source for the strategies outlined in this syllabus. For it is within the Council circle that the victim, the gang leader, the facilitator, the academically challenged and those conversely gifted are given an opportunity to be heard, healed, safe and confident.

The Council model has had to confront harsh social realities that generate conditions that damage kids. The United States has a divorce rate of over 50%. Many children are growing up in homes where they do not receive the nurturing they need. Gangs are burgeoning nationwide because they address the child's craving to belong, to experience family. Even children in two parent homes are drawn to these sinister groups. Why? In a society where power and money are obsessions, there are precious few people for children to trust. They wear masks to hide their true feelings and their real needs. They experience alienation, discrimination, and they suffer, many alone. Some react by turning to drugs or violence. They implode or explode. The music they listen to echoes their anger, frustration and sense of abandonment.

The appeal to join Council is basic. It offers youth an opportunity to grow and develop in ways heretofore thought impossible. And it flows from a simple invitation for children to create within the CFU circle the family they need to achieve their life goals. Kids are by nature tribal and seek identity with groups more at this stage than at any other phase of their lives. Their need for approval as previously cited is at its peak, and peer pressure is greater and more influential than the precepts imposed on them by adults.

The Council utilizes this need in the most constructive of fashions by introducing a value system where being open, vulnerable and authentic is positive and being closed,

alienated and without affection is unhealthy. In this milieu the need to be in quality relationships supersedes all other considerations. The Council's curriculum is customized to meet this end. Making relationships work is the primary goal of the child's introduction to the program. Learning behaviors that promote healthy relationships and avoiding those that impede them render children highly effective in their dealings with others. They are free to experiment with new behaviors and roles that enable them to be successful in the various venues of their lives. They exude confidence and self worth as a result.

Coupled with the benefits of a curriculum that teaches a child how to be effective in his relationships with others is another requisite objective to defeat the predations of gangs and bullies. And that other component to the Council's mission is the establishing of partnerships with faculty, administrators, non-pedagogical personnel, parent associations and other entities to create networks and environments that make bullyism and gang activity extremely difficult. All these streams converge as a school or community center pursues CFU's mission to empower individuals and groups with the skills necessary to promote unity, safety and achievement in the systems that use our strategies.

### **Overview of the Partnerships to Prevent Bullyism Curriculum**

The Partnership Curriculum utilizes time tested strategies and best practices from both our school and community based networks. Lesson plans from our Comprehensive and Dragon Slayer syllabus are reconstructed here to focus exclusively on combating Bullyism. Our empowerment strategies are also incorporated along with projects and initiatives to convert an anonymous building into a unified community where all who are affected by the climate of the school play a role in reframing it into a more humane and safe environment.

Many of the precepts of John Dewey are present here as well. Kids do not just discuss the problem of bully behavior; they are engaged in activities to alleviate it. All lessons have workshop applications where action and follow up are mandated.

A significant component to CFU's success in transforming kids and the schools they attend is the utilization of mythology, which has always been the linchpin to the program's appeal and outcomes. Myths bring meaning and organization to people's lives. They inform all human expression from the arts to the cultural underpinnings of nations. Gangs use mythology to address the need for family and to provide a cultural response to what they perceive as an indifferent society that refuses to address the plight of those marginalized from opportunities extended to others. Gang initiation more than anything else symbolizes the subliminal application of primitive puberty rites where boys had to perform heroic deeds such as killing an enemy or a dangerous animal as a prerequisite to manhood. The symbols, beads, colors, body language, clothing and gang signs are all part of this sinister ethos.

CFU uses myth in its most positive application. It caters to the same needs that gangs do but replaces a culture of death and despair with a culture of hope. Pivoting around

the 4 pillars or principles of Family, Unity, Self-Esteem and Empowerment (FUSE), the child is no longer directed by those who impose criminal activity as the passport for belonging to a family. Instead a totally new rubric engages them in a culture of support, growth, openness and community.

This use of mythology is exemplified in the application of the 4 pillars and the child's immersion into CFU's Dragon Slayer myth, which is rich in metaphors that direct kids to face their dragons both singularly and in groups. The tethers and obstacles they are often unaware of come alive in the myth, and the challenge to confront them initiated. Like gangs, Council uses symbols but for positive ends not negative ones. The child's journey into gang life leads to incarceration and death. In Council it leads to aspiration, possibility and life long support. It's why gang leaders, even in prison, join us and leave their past affiliations, which tragically are the cause of their incarceration.

Since 1975 the appeal of this culture of hope has been a beacon for young people who have been in gangs or have been either bullied or been bullies, a lighthouse where those lost get a second chance at life and a second chance to create a family and support system that will sustain them not only in the present but the future as well. The wisdom and experience accumulated by our principals, teachers and staff in confronting these issues are factored into this curriculum.

**Planned Parenthood of New York City  
Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination in NYC Schools –  
Protecting LGBT and Other Vulnerable Students  
October 18, 2016**

Good afternoon. I am Elizabeth Adams, Director of Government Relations at Planned Parenthood of New York City (PPNYC). I am pleased to submit testimony for today's oversight hearing on bullying, harassment, and discrimination in New York City schools. Planned Parenthood of New York City thanks our strong supporter and Chair of the New York City Council Committee on Education, Honorable Council Member Daniel Dromm for his leadership in convening this hearing. We'd also like to thank Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, the Committee on Education, and the entire City Council for their dedication to these issues and we welcome the opportunity to discuss ways we can improve supportive measures for all New York City students.

As a leading sexual and reproductive health care provider, we see more than 64,000 patients annually in our five health centers, located in every borough of New York City. In addition to our clinical services, PPNYC has a robust education program that 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. All of the educational curriculum we provide for youth includes a healthy relationship component. One of our curricula in particular, titled *All of Us*, is designed as a holistic model of sexual health for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and gender non-conforming (LGB and TGNC) youth that recognizes the interconnections between bullying and sexual assault, and education regarding healthy communication and consent. *All of Us* provides LGB and TGNC teens with sexual health information that is medically accurate and age appropriate, while also acknowledging genital diversity as well as the vast range of gender and sexual expressions, in order to create an affirming environment for youth identities and promote healthy decision making in teens' sexual lives. In the next two years, our Education department will expand *All of Us* to all of our youth programming, reaching approximately 4,000 New Yorkers, so that young people along the gender and sexuality spectrums are ensured access to affirming education. We recognize many middle and high school students are embarking on the process of exploring their sexualities and need a safe and supportive environment to do so. Staff will test our new curriculum twice over the next two years to ensure programming is accurately provided and resonates with NYC's youth, and so we can continue to adapt to best meet the needs of our city's young people.

Bullying, harassment, and discrimination disproportionately impacts marginalized youth, including LGBTQ students. The recent results of the first national study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on the health risks of U.S. lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) high school students found that compared with their peers, LGB youth are significantly more likely to experience dating violence, sexual assault, bullying, and be threatened or injured with a weapon at school.<sup>1</sup> Compared to heterosexual peers, 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 physical dating violence (18% vs. 8%). The CDC report

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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>

also found that LGB students are at substantial risk for suicide, depression, and absenteeism because they do not feel safe for being who they are.<sup>2</sup> For transgender and gender non-confirming (TGNC) youth, school can be even more difficult; nationwide, 78% of transgender individuals have reported being harassed, 35% report being physically assaulted, and 12% have shared that they've experienced sexual violence between kindergarten and 12th grade.<sup>3</sup>

While New York has shown it is committed to addressing rates of assault and bullying of LGBTQ students, it is clear that much more must be done. New York State enacted the Dignity for all Students Act (DASA) in September 2010 to improve school support for students of all genders, races, religions, and ethnicities through measures such as teacher training and reporting requirements. However, despite the high levels of sexual assault and violence reported by LGB and TGNC students nationwide, schools consistently report few or no incidents of harassment, bullying, and discrimination, as required by the law. In the 2014-15 school year, 53% of schools reported *zero* incidents of harassment, bullying, or discrimination of students, and 94% of schools reported only 10 incidents or fewer.<sup>4</sup> For schools to improve reporting and accountability, teachers need greater resources on what constitutes discrimination and harassment and how to take appropriate action, and schools need to do more to help students feel safe in reaching out to staff for support. According to a 2004 GLSEN report, students regularly feel that schools' faculty and staff often contribute to the problem of homophobia by either making harmful comments themselves or by failing to intervene when they overhear such remarks.<sup>5</sup>

Our experience as a sexual health education and service provider shows us firsthand the gaps that remain in New York City's health education, which has a significant impact on young people's health and well-being. While New York City requires sexuality education to be provided during part of a semester in middle school and part of a semester in high school, there are no meaningful enforcement measures to ensure sex ed is actually taught in New York City schools or that it is comprehensive, and as such, students' experiences vary widely. In a 2015 survey by the Connect to Protect (C2P) Bronx Coalition, one-third of Bronx high school students said they have never received any sexuality education or are unsure if they have.<sup>6</sup> Comprehensive sexuality education includes the teaching of anatomy & physiology, puberty, pregnancy & reproduction, STDs & HIV prevention & treatment, as well as gender, respect of others' values, cultures and identities, positive body image, and healthy relationships and consent, including anti-bullying and anti-intimate partner violence measures. Marginalized students often face harassment or assault because of their gender identity, sexuality, religion, or ability, areas that are core learning components of an inclusive comprehensive health education curriculum.

It has never been clearer that NYC needs comprehensive sexuality education in every school that addresses the health needs of students of all genders and sexualities. Studies have shown that positive youth development education, including lessons on healthy relationships and communication, is crucial in

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

<sup>3</sup> Grant, Jaime, Lisa Mottet, and Justin Tanis. (2011). *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National. 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>4</sup> See NYSED website, "School Safety and the Educational Climate: DASA Incident Reports, 2014-15, NYC" available at [http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/school\\_safety/school\\_safety\\_data\\_reporting.html](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/school_safety/school_safety_data_reporting.html) (Retrieved Oct. 18, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network. *The 2003 National School Climate Survey: the School-Related Experiences of Our Nation's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth.* New York, NY: GLSEN, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Survey results from "C2P Bronx"; Connect to Protect BronxWorks Sexual Health Education Survey, 2015.

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Planned Parenthood of New York City

helping young people to make health-promoting decisions and feel more positively connected to school,<sup>7</sup> and that sexuality education specifically reduces risky sexual behaviors, absenteeism, and student dropout rates.<sup>8</sup> The National Sexuality Education Standards calls for comprehensive sexual health education to start in kindergarten and build up through 12th grade, so that schools start fostering safe environments for all students early on. Teaching topics like positive relationships, bodily autonomy and personal safety, and respect for others in elementary grades is an important part of sexual health education that can help to prevent harassment and intolerance throughout one's school experience.

While implementation of comprehensive sexuality education in all schools must be a key priority in addressing harassment and discrimination, more must also be done to strengthen and update the current LGBTQ-inclusive components of New York City's recommended middle and high school sexual health curricula. PPNYC is a proud member of the Sexuality Education Alliance of NYC (SEANYC), a coalition advocating for comprehensive, age-appropriate, culturally competent, and inclusive sexuality education in all schools kindergarten through 12th grade, and works in partnership with the coalition's Youth Advisory Council to address gaps in New York City's health education requirement. The Youth Advisory Council is comprised of nineteen student leaders that engage with young people directly on the provision of sex ed in NYC schools. Members of the Council have shared feedback that students' health education is often limited to discussions of heterosexual sex, and that many LGBT students report feeling excluded and isolated by the lack of health information that pertains to their life experiences. It is not enough for our schools to stop at discussions of abstinence and contraception to help young people avoid unintended pregnancies. Sexual health education must be responsive to the needs of all students.

Comprehensive inclusive sexual health education is critical to improving the safety of LGBTQ youth and other vulnerable students. Reports on the alarming rates of harassment and violence of LGB and TGNC students point to the need for inclusive sexuality education that educates students on the diversity of sexual experiences and gender identity, including lessons on LGBTQ issues and health. We urge New York City to implement an enforceable sexual health education program and direct appropriate resources to ensure the delivery of sexuality education in all grades—including lessons on sexuality, gender identity and expression, and supporting LGBTQ peers—to all students. As the largest metropolitan area in the United States, New York City has an opportunity to become a leader in comprehensive sexuality education. Young people deserve honest, age-appropriate information and skills-building to support their own health and well-being, as well as tools to build healthy relationships and caring communities that respect the values and identities of all.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

###

Since 1916, Planned Parenthood of New York City (PPNYC) has been an advocate for and provider of reproductive health services and education for New Yorkers. Through a threefold mission of clinical services, education, and advocacy, PPNYC is bringing better health and more fulfilling lives to each new generation of New Yorkers. As a voice for sexual and reproductive health equity, PPNYC supports legislation and policies to ensure that all New Yorkers—and, in fact, people around the world—will have access to the full range of reproductive health care services and information.

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<sup>7</sup> pgs. 29-31: [http://www.equitycampaign.org/i/a/document/12557\\_EquityMattersVol6\\_Web03082010.pdf](http://www.equitycampaign.org/i/a/document/12557_EquityMattersVol6_Web03082010.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Walker SC, Kerns SEU, Lyon AR, et al. (2010). Impact of School-Based Health Center Use on Academic Outcomes. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 46: 251-257.

**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: October 19 2016

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: IVAN KRISTHIANE G. DAGUIA

Address: 244-39 56th Ave Bellerose NY 11426

I represent: UIGNAYAN YOUTH FOR JUSTICE AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Address: 72-18 Roosevelt Ave. Jackson Heights NY

**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: October 19, 2016

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Athena Arielle Magno

Address: 46-18 66th St Woodside, NY 11377

I represent: Ugnayan Youth for Justice & Social Change

Address: 72-18 Roosevelt Avenue, Jackson Heights, NY

**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: October 19, 2016

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kian Anilao

Address: 89-70 210th Place, Queens Village NY

I represent: Ugnayan Youth for Justice and Social Change

Address: 72-18 Roosevelt Avenue, Jackson Heights NY

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/19/16

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Camilla Barolod

Address: 217-45 Hollis Ave. Queens Village, NY

I represent: Ugnayan Youth for Justice and Social Change

Address: 72-18 Roosevelt Ave. Jackson Heights, NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/19/16

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: TERREZZA RENTON

Address: 11-16 124th St. COLLEGE POINT, NY 11356

I represent: Ugnayan Youth for Justice and Social Change

Address: 72-18 ROOSEVELT AVE JACKSON HEIGHTS, NY

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/19/16

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Khushboo Ijaz

Address: 85-08 Grand Avenue Elmhurst NY 11373

I represent: Daum

Address: Jackson Height

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dejohn Jones

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

I represent: PAC - Parent Action Committee

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mrs. Paylette Joshi

Address: 3340 Bailey Ave #170

I represent: Thomas Johnson + OTHER

Address: CHILDREN 3340 Bailey Ave #170

BOX NY 10463

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/19/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Karen Made

Address: 51-40 30th Ave.

I represent: I.S. 10 Q

Address: 45-11 31st Ave.

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Robert J. De Sena  
Address: 58 Karol Place Nuttinton NY  
I represent: Council for Unity 11753  
Address: 50 Ave X Ste 346, BK. NY 11223

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Dr. Debbie Almontaser  
Address: 239 Thompson St  
I represent: Muslim Community Network  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Elizabeth Rose  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
I represent: N/C DOE  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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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: \_\_\_\_\_

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYC DOE

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: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Kenya Reid

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

I represent: NYC DOE

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

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bonnie Laboy

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

I represent: NYC DOE

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/19/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Saif Shumman

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

I represent: The Arab American Family Support

Address: 150 Court St., 3rd Fl. Center  
Brooklyn, NY 11213

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/19/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jordan Greenberg

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

I represent: Arab American Family Support

Address: Center

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/19/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jeff Ervine

Address: 381 Park Ave So

I represent: Bridg-it School

Address: jeff@bridgit.com

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kesi Foster

Address: 726 Broadway

I represent: Urban Youth Collaborative

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

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**Appearance Card**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/19/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Harjot Kaur

Address: 50 Broad St

I represent: Sikh Coalition

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

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/19/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Harvey Chism

Address: 549 W. 149th St. New York NY 10031

I represent: South Bronx Community Charter H.S

Address: 890 Washington Ave Bronx NY

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lindsey Duet

Address: 31-20 Ditmars Blvd.

I represent: Generation Q/Queens Comm. House

Address: 110-01 62nd Drive Forest Hills 11375

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/18/2016

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: James Clement

Address: 104 W 29th St, 4th floor

I represent: Tyler Clement Foundation

Address: 228 South 3rd St, #A3

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sterling Roberson

Address: VP, United Federation

I represent: of Teachers

Address: 52 Broadway

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/19/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Prof. Mirala Brassard

Address: 525 S W 120th ST. Teachers College

I represent: Raven Hill Way Foundation Columbia

Address: NY, NY 12203 Univ

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Charlotte Pope

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

I represent: Childrens Defense Fund - New York

Address: 15 Maiden Lane

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Dr. Elizabeth Payne

Address: Hunter College

I represent: Queens Education Research Institute Hunter

Address: 47 E. 65th Street #10 College

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/19/16

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Neil Sarkar

Address: 354 E 91<sup>st</sup> New York, NY 10128

I represent: NYC public school student

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Katerina Carr

Address: 333 E. 80<sup>th</sup> St. Apt 1G, New York, NY, 10073

I represent: Students in NYC public schools, East Side Middle School

Address: 331 East 91<sup>st</sup> Street 10028

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

Name: Amy Leppinger (PLEASE PRINT)

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

I represent: NYC Education Network

Address: 11 Vesey Street, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10013

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/19/16

Name: LILLIAN RIVERA (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 2 ASTOR PLACE

I represent: HETRICK-MARTIN INSTITUTE

Address: 2 ASTOR PLACE

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

Name: Amy Leppinger (PLEASE PRINT)

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

I represent: LEJAL SEMUS NYC

Address: 89-00 Sutphin Blvd, 5th Fl. Jamaica 11435

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

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jose Abrigo

Address: 3424 33rd St Apt. 1 Astoria, NY 11106

I represent: Legal Services NYC

Address: 8900 Sutphin Blvd 5th Fl Jamaica, NY 11435

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Evan R. Bernstein - 17 Res. Dir.

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

I represent: ADL - Anti-Defamation League

Address: 605 3rd Ave.

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Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: Oct. 19, 2016

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eliza Byard

Address: 151 W 3rd St

I represent: GLSEN

Address: 110 William St., NY, NY 10038

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

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: OCT 19 2016

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: ELVIS Miguel

Address: 611 W 152nd St Apt 5D

I represent: NYCLU

Address: 125 Blooming street

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Jordan Greenberg

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

I represent: Arab American Family Support Center

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

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☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/19/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jillian Weiss

Address: 20 W. 20<sup>th</sup> St, Suite 705, NYC 10011

I represent: Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund

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

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gena Miller

Address: 151 W. 30<sup>th</sup> Street

I represent: Advocates for Children of NY

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

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