

**EDUCATION
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ALLIANCE**

March 30, 2020

The Honorable Brad Little
Governor
State Capitol
PO Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720

Dear Governor Little:

As teachers, we understand and acknowledge that every child needs something different from us. It is the core of best practices in modern teaching that we bend and shape our curriculum and teaching to make sure each student benefits from our efforts. This means every child. We don't pick and choose which child gets best practice, we must strive to reach it for all of our students, including transgender students.

Sadly, despite great efforts by numerous devoted educators, many transgender students and other LGBTQ students experience high rates of school-based obstacles to success, including bullying, harassment, assault, and violence, as well as school policies and educator practices hostile to LGBTQ students, especially transgender students. For example, the most recent data from the National School Climate Survey by GLSEN indicate that more than 8 in 10 LGBTQ students experienced harassment or assault at school. In fact, transgender students experienced a more hostile school climate than all other LGBTQ students. As teachers, these sobering numbers are more than just statistics to us. We see the impact of this every day in our classrooms and hallways, and in the health and happiness of the students we serve.

And those realities take a toll on LGBTQ students; those who experience victimization are more likely to drop out of school, have lower postsecondary education aspirations, and have higher levels of depression and anxiety. And among youth who identify as sexual minorities, the likelihood of death by suicide has been estimated to be at least twice the likelihood of death by suicide among heterosexual youth.

Governor Little, please understand that the safety and well-being of every child in your state, including transgender youth, can be impacted by your decisions to sign or veto legislation. As you consider HB 500, please understand the many challenges transgender youth face, and the extent to which the positive outlet of sports participation can bring skill development, healthy exercise, connection to others (youth and supportive adults, like coaches), as well as self-confidence and emotional well-being.

We urge you to listen to the words of Jessica Henderson Daniel, the President of the American Psychological Association, when she says "For decades, researchers have recognized that gender

Education Civil Rights Alliance
www.edrights.org
Twitter: @Ed_CivilRights
Facebook: @EdRights
Director: Miriam A Rollin, JD
mrollin@youthlaw.org
703-408-6002

ECR Alliance is convened by:
National Center for Youth Law
1313 L Street, NW, Suite 130
Washington, DC 20005
www.youthlaw.org

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is not necessarily determined by a person’s biological sex assigned at birth [...]. Purposely ignoring this body of evidence is indefensible and certain to add to the stress and discrimination already experienced by transgender people.”

We are asking you to veto the harmful HB 500, and instead support transgender students.

As teachers we must meet the needs of our students. We ask you to join us in recognizing that our transgender students are deserving of best practice from each and every one of us.

Sincerely,

Brett Bigham, Oregon Teacher of the Year

Sydney Chaffee, 2017 National Teacher of the Year and MA Teacher of the Year

Melissa Collins, Global Teacher Prize Finalist – Top 50

Megan Olivia Hall, Minnesota Teacher of the Year

Rick Joseph, Michigan Teacher of the Year

Athanasia (Sia) Kyriakakos, Maryland Teacher of the Year

Kareem Neal, Arizona Teacher of the Year

Estella Owoimaha-Church, Global Teacher Prize Finalist – Top 50

Thomas Rademacher, Minnesota Teacher of the Year

Rosie Reid, California Teacher of the Year

Monica Washington, Texas Teacher of the Year

Kelisa Wing, DoDEA Teacher of the Year

Maryann Woods-Murphy, New Jersey Teacher of the Year

Abdul Wright, Minnesota Teacher of the Year

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