



One Colorado HB-1323 Testimony

Members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Nadine Bridges, I use she/her pronouns and I'm the Executive Director of One Colorado, the state's leading LGBTQ+ advocacy organization.

I'm writing this letter today in support of HB-1323. We know that across Colorado, students have been denied the ability to express their cultural heritage, country of origin, sexual orientation, and religious traditions in formal graduation ceremonies. These restrictions on students prevent them from expressing their pride, and joy in what should be a momentous achievement.

Speaking as a proud aunt, I am planning on attending my nephew's high school graduation at East High School in May. He is the last one on my side of my family to graduate from high school. I cannot imagine attending that ceremony in support of him, only to discover that he would be prevented from celebrating his cultural roots as he walks across the stage.

HB-1323 will prohibit public institutions from restricting what a student may wear under the student's required graduation attire. This common-sense legislation states students will not be able to wear or display an item that would cause disruption or interfere with the graduation ceremony. Instead, HB-1323 will create a standard for how districts can determine what is and isn't appropriate, rather than leaving the decision up to the personally held beliefs of principals or superintendents. Every student should have the right to celebrate their culture and identity.

As the Executive Director of the state's leading LGBTQ+ organization, it's my responsibility to speak for the many LGBTQ+ students across Colorado that will be positively impacted by this legislation. The national organization, GLSEN, has conducted research finding that 20% of LGBTQ+ students have been prevented from wearing clothes deemed "inappropriate" based on gender and that many LGBTQ+ students also experience other forms of discrimination.

No student should experience this kind of discrimination. HB-1323 is a clear step that we can take to ensure the identities of students are respected and protected, regardless of their cultural background, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation.

I urge a yes vote on HB-1323.