

House Judiciary

05/05/2023 Upon Adjournment of Finance and Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services

SB23-296 Prevent Harassment & Discrimination In Schools

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Sage Sankofa For One Colorado	<p>One Colorado supports this legislation because it is vitally important that all students and families in Colorado have access to consistent guidelines and clear procedures when it comes to sex-based discrimination and harassment. LGBTQ+ students have and continue to experience discrimination, bullying, and harassment at alarmingly higher rates than their non-LGBTQ+ peers. GLSEN reports:</p> <p>83% of LGBTQ+ students experienced harassment or assault at school, 68% of LGBTQ+ students report feeling unsafe at school because of bullying regarding their sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression,</p> <p>The 2021 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey found that 44% of high school students report being bullied because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This is unacceptable.</p> <p>One Colorado frequently receives inquiries from families who share concerns regarding their LGBTQ+ student’s rights being infringed upon and confusion on how to move forward. We hear firsthand how many parents, guardians and students do not have clarity from their schools and school districts, who do not provide transparency around their policies and procedures when it comes to the Title IX regulation.</p> <p>It is not enough for standards to simply exist. We need implementation of standards and policies throughout our education system. SB-296 will reinforce consistency in our school systems and ensure all Colorado students are protected under Title IX.</p> <p>I urge you to vote yes on SB23-296. Thank you all for your time.</p>
Elizabeth Meyer For themselves	<p>Chair, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present to you today. I am Dr. Liz Meyer and I am speaking to you as a parent, former teacher, current teacher educator, scholar, and expert on gender, bullying, and harassment in schools. I am a professor and researcher who has been studying law, policy, and school climate for over 20 years and have published extensively on Title IX and related topics and I am in support of this bill.</p> <p>SB23-296 does not change what the law says about protecting students from discrimination and harassment. We already have laws that establish these basic protections. What this bill will do is offer students and educators clarity and a roadmap for support. Existing state and federal legislation is too vague and has not been effective in helping</p>

	<p>reduce harassment and discrimination in schools. The strengths in this bill are the specific guidelines and expectations that all students and families in Colorado can count on if they are experiencing harassment or discrimination.</p> <p>From national and state data we know that 70-78% of LGBTQ students in Colorado have been harassed at school based on their sexual orientation (GLSEN 2019; HKCS 2021) and 40-91% of High school students of color in Colorado have been bullied based on their race or ethnicity (HKCS 2021). It is also true that 48% of all secondary students (grades 7-12) nationwide reported being sexually harassed at school (AAUW, 2011) with girls (56%) experiencing more than boys (40%).</p> <p>Furthermore, this legislation will help protect Colorado districts from civil rights complaints and litigation. What it calls for reflects common remedial measures required by settlement agreements regarding sexual violence and racial discrimination in Colorado schools.</p> <p>School districts want to do better for their students but unless they are provided guidance by the state – many small rural and even large urban districts– lack the knowledge, support, and commitment to enact meaningful change. This bill establishes clear, essential steps to improve how Colorado schools can prevent AND respond more effectively to reports of discrimination and harassment. Thank you.</p>
--	--