



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
School Psychologists

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May 14, 2019

Re: Support of H.R. 5 – Equality Act

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), I write to urge your support and a “yes” vote on the Equality Act (H.R. 5). NASP represents 25,000 school psychologists who work with students, parents, teachers, administrators, and communities to ensure students have the necessary supports needed to thrive at school, at home, and in life. We serve *all* students who are present in our nation’s schools.

NASP has a long history of advocating for the safety and well-being of students, including our advocacy for policies that protect all students from harassment and discrimination. We believe that the civil rights of LGBTQ+ students are protected as part of U.S. public schools’ obligations under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. This includes respecting a person’s right to express gender identity, the right to modify gender expression when necessary, and the right to have their gender identity affirmed and acknowledged. Our position is consistent with all major medical, mental health, and education organizations.

Surveys indicate that 70% of LGBTQ+ students have been verbally harassed; 23% have been physically harassed; and 12% have been physically assaulted at school as a result of perceived or real sexual orientation. It is absolutely vital that our youth learn in a school climate that is safe, respectful, and free from discrimination, harassment, violence and abuse. The absence of the statutory protections that the Equality Act would provide is preventing youth from feeling psychologically safe and is leaving them unable to learn. In addition, the rescission of the Department of Education’s guidance indicating that Title IX discrimination protections applied to transgender youth has left students feeling victimized and schools undefended in their desire to protect the rights of all students. Passage of the Equality Act will remove the ambiguity in interpretation of the law, set a uniform standard across the country, and make it clear that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression is prohibited in places of employment, in housing, in credit, in public spaces, and in our nation’s schools. The law would also provide necessary protection for schools to determine appropriate actions in order to prohibit discrimination.

All students, including those who are LGBTQ+, should have an equal opportunity to learn in schools, earn a living, and provide for themselves and their loved ones without fear of harassment or discrimination for simply being who they are. The Equality Act will finally give millions of Americans the protections they deserve - the protections that have already been given to other minority groups in our country in the past 50 years.

NASP urges you to vote “yes” and support its passage. Please contact Dr. Kelly Vaillancourt Strobach, NASP Director of Policy and Advocacy (kvallancourt@naspweb.org) with any questions or for additional information.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Minke, PhD, NCSP
Executive Director