

BILL: House Bill 65 -Public Schools – Medical and Psychological Treatment in School–Based Health 3 Centers and Public Schools – Parental Notice

DATE: March 13, 2024

POSITION: UNFAVORABLE

COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations

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GLSEN Maryland, the statewide chapter of GLSEN National, a nonprofit organization centered on creating and sustaining inclusive K-12 education for LGBTQ+ students, **opposes** House Bill 65 as it places LGBTQ+ students at risk of increased family conflict and family rejection, and poses a barrier to accessing care, as currently written.

House Bill 65 will require schools to inform parents of any medical or mental healthcare that they receive in school. For LGBTQ+ youth who are receiving care in school which requires a provider to know about their gender identity or sexual orientation (e.g., students who see a therapist at school to help them process experiences of stigma), the requirement that parents be notified places many students at risk.

While we wish it were true that all parents of LGBTQ+ youth were supportive and affirming of their children, this sadly is not the case. The Center for American Progress reports that roughly half of LGBTQ+ youth experience negative reactions from their parents when they come out as LGBTQ+. Unfortunately, negative parental reactions lead to increased risk for the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ youth. According to research by the Trevor Project, 14% of LGBTQ+ youth reported sleeping at a place other than their home because they were kicked out or abandoned by their parents; family rejection or conflict due to being LGBTQ+ is the primary reason for their homelessness.

It is precisely for the increased risk of parental rejection and conflict that the American Psychological Association and National Association of School Psychologists (2020) “**recommend schools develop policies that respect the right to privacy for students, parents, and colleagues with regard to sexual orientation, sexual development, gender expression, gender identity, and transgender status, and clearly state that school personnel will not share information with anyone about the sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, intersex/DSD condition, or transgender status of a student, parent, or school employee without that individual’s informed consent.**” HB65 violates this best-practice recommendation.

Students who worry that their therapist or medical care provider will “out” them as LGBTQ+ to their parents is a well-documented barrier to accessing care. LGBTQ+ students who have unsupportive families avoid accessing medical and mental health care when they think that doing so could lead them to be “outed” as LGBTQ+ to their families. Thus, HB 65, if passed, will deter LGBTQ+ youth from accessing medical and mental health care in schools.

Given the potential for HB65 to harm LGBTQ+ youth and deter students from accessing care in school, GLSEN Maryland opposes HB65 and respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report.

References.

American Psychological Association. (2020). APA Resolution on Supporting Sexual/Gender Diverse Children and Adolescents in School.

<https://www.apa.org/about/policy/resolution-supporting-gender-diverse-children.pdf>