

**SB659- Prekindergarten Programs and Primary and Secondary Schools - Student
Privacy Policy Requirements and Discrimination Reporting**

Favorable

Education, Energy, and the Environment

March 4, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Feldman and members of the committee,

My name is Katherine Dangel, and I am testifying in support of SB659, due to how it protects students. I am a sophomore at Glenelg High School, which is a public school. I am here in support of this bill, so that students in private schools can receive the same protections I did.

This bill requires that information shared with school staff, such as mental health issues or records of assault and harassment are kept confidential. This bill is important to me because of my own struggles with my mental health. I was able to share it with my school counselor, something that I wouldn't have done if I'd known that the conversation wouldn't be private. The support that she and my teachers gave me was invaluable, and I want other students to have the same support and leniency when going through their own mental health struggles. Similarly, privacy is important for students who are questioning their gender or sexual identity. If students are afraid that these conversations will be shared, then they may abstain from sharing important information, and miss out on the help that the school can provide, and that I received.

The second way that this bill protects students is keeping a record of when discrimination plays a role in harassment. I have had personal experience in how important tracking discrimination is, due to how it influences the motives and responses to widespread harassment.

Understanding what causes harassment and bullying leads to targeted and effective intervention. It also makes victims feel heard, which can help them feel more protected.

Since Trump's presidency, I have personally witnessed an increase in harassment and hostility towards many of my transgender classmates as a result of the decisions made by the Trump administration. Being afraid of being a victim of hate has interfered with their education, their hobbies, and their daily life. This constant anxiety has contributed to worsening mental health, including anxiety and depressive conditions. This isn't fair for kids who are already experiencing things like body dysmorphia or the mental health struggles that come with the isolating feelings that many transgender kids struggle with. Passing this bill can help protect students, whether they have mental health issues, or are being bullied. Because of this, please pass SB659.