



Affirming and Inclusive Schools Task Force Delivers Report to Gov. Pritzker

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SPRINGFIELD - The Affirming and Inclusive Schools Task Force delivered a report to Governor JB Pritzker today detailing recommended procedures and best practices for K-12 schools to support transgender, nonbinary and gender-nonconforming students.

Created by Gov. Pritzker last June under Executive Order 19-11, the task force was made up of a broad array of stakeholders, including advocates, students and teachers from every corner of the state along with crucial state agencies. The report provides guidance for school districts in the absence of leadership from the federal government.

“I want every student in Illinois to know that there is a place for them and that their schools should be safe and welcoming places, and my administration is deeply committed to this work,” **said Governor JB Pritzker.** “I applaud the hard work of the Affirming and Inclusive Schools Task Force and take their recommendations to heart, especially since the federal government has failed to give school leaders guidance. I encourage schools around the state to use these principles and best practices as they work to make their learning environments more inclusive.”

There are well-documented risks associated with unsafe and unwelcoming schools among transgender, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming youth. According to a 2019 national survey by the Trevor Project, 78% of transgender and nonbinary youth reported being the subject of discrimination due to their gender identity and 58% reported being discouraged from using the restroom that corresponds with their gender identity.

Similarly, the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that transgender students are 67% more likely to be bullied at school, 280% more likely to attempt suicide and approximately 700% more likely to report significant substance use of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines, ecstasy, and opioids than their cisgender peers.

However, the positive impact of an inclusive and affirming learning environment is also clear. The Trevor Project's 2019 survey shows that LGBTQ+ youth who had at least one accepting adult in their lives were 40% less likely to report a suicide attempt in the past year. Further, according to GLSEN's 2017 National School Climate Survey, students with an LGBTQ+-affirming club in their school reported fewer incidents of victimization, an increased number of supportive school staff, and a greater sense of belonging in the school community.

The report reviewed all facets of the student experience and recommends best practices for both school boards and administrators to create an affirming and inclusive school environment at the district level. It details the legal protections for students in Illinois and nationally recognized best practices on the following topics:

- Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying
- Gender Support Model
- Confidentiality
- Names, Pronouns, and School Records
- Use of Facilities
- Dress Codes
- Sports, Clubs, and Events
- Overnight School Trips
- Curriculum and Teaching
- Training
- Parent/Guardian Involvement
- Support for District Staff

The task force also recommends reform at the statewide level.

The Illinois State Board of Education is urged to consider providing guidance on the procedures for updating names and gender markers.

The Illinois Department of Human Rights is advised to consider issuing guidance to districts regarding how to comply with the Illinois Human Rights Act, with specific attention to the rights of transgender, nonbinary and gender-nonconforming individuals.

The state as a whole should also consider taking the following action, according to the task force:

- Exploring how teacher preparation programs can address issues relating to supporting transgender, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming students

- Working with stakeholders to evaluate the State's comprehensive sexual education curriculum for kindergarten through 12th grade
- Promoting greater inclusion with regard to school-based activities, including but not limited to engaging with the Illinois Elementary School Association and the Illinois High School Association to review their policies on inclusion of transgender, nonbinary and gender non-conforming students

The full report from the Affirming and Inclusive Schools Task Force is attached.