



News Release

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STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION APPROVES NEW SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROTECTING LGBT STUDENTS

September 14, 2016

LANSING – The State Board of Education today approved new voluntary guidance to assist schools in creating school environments where LGBT students can live, learn and thrive.

The 6-2 vote in favor of the revised guidelines follows a thorough public comment period in which nearly 13,000 comments were received and analyzed by the Michigan Department of Education, and two public meetings were held by the State Board to gather feedback.

“Today’s vote sends a clear message about the kind of state Michigan is going to be,” said State Board of Education President John Austin. “The board members supporting this guidance showed that we’re serious about improving learning and life outcomes for all our school children, including LGBT children. We’re providing a roadmap for schools across Michigan to ensure that all our kids are safe in school and put in a position to succeed.”

The State Board created draft guidelines in response to requests from educators across the state. A work group of educators, health and mental health professionals, social workers, parents and education stakeholders worked together to develop the school guidance. The draft guidelines were presented by the State Board for public comment in March and subsequently revised to reflect public feedback.

The new guidelines provide schools many common-sense policies and practices that respect the rights, safety and privacy concerns of all students, including gay and transgender students. The revised guidelines also strengthen parental involvement in decision-making about their children while providing for schools to protect the health and safety of at-risk children.

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The guidance shares best practices already in place at many schools across Michigan as they work to address concerns of academic achievement and safety for the nearly nine percent of Michigan students who identify as LGBT. Twelve percent of these students did not go to school in the past year, because they felt unsafe – twice the rate of straight students. Forty-six percent had grades that consisted mostly of C's, D's and F's, again nearly double the number of heterosexual students with similarly poor academic performance. And most disturbingly, 29 percent of LGB students have attempted suicide in the last year, 4.5 times the rate for non-LGB students.

Organizations including the Michigan PTA, Michigan Associations of School Social Workers, Counselors, Psychologists, Academy of Pediatricians; teachers' unions, local school boards and chambers of commerce weighed in to support the guidance and the importance of Michigan sending a message of support, inclusion and tolerance for LGBT children.

The approved SBE voluntary guidance is attached.

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