

Belmont Human Rights Commission Supports LGBTQ Inclusive Curriculum in MA Public Schools

The MA legislature is considering [Bill H.618](#). If approved, it will require that MA educational curriculum standards include sufficient instruction on the history, roles, and contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people in the history of this country and our Commonwealth. An LGBTQ inclusive curriculum would benefit our community and our society as a whole by including the integral role LGBTQ members in our society and our country have played. This serves not only to educate more inclusively but also to contribute toward efforts to prevent the marginalization of and misinformation about the LGBTQ community. Most importantly, members of our LGBTQ community will be able to see their contributions reflected in the tapestry of American history and society. For too long, not all members of our community have seen their histories reflected back to them nor celebrated within the greater American story. This effort would have a powerful impact on students who self-identify as LGBTQ.

A population-based longitudinal study published by the journal [Pediatrics](#) (Luk, Goldstein, Yu, Haynie, & Gilman, 2021) evaluated whether LGBTQ adolescents had earlier onset of suicidal ideation and faster progression from ideas to action on suicide compared to their heterosexual counterparts. It found that LGBTQ adolescents had a higher lifetime risk of suicidal ideation, suicidal plans, and attempts, compared to heterosexual adolescents. In response to the concerns raised by the research, an [editorial](#) in the same journal called on pediatricians to screen all youth for depression and suicidal ideation. Also, to routinely screen for LGBTQ status, given the higher risk for suicidal ideation and behaviors affecting LGBTQ youth. The results of this study highlight the mental health disparities that disproportionately affect LGBTQ youth.

It is important to note that LGBTQ youth are also most vulnerable to bullying and harassment based on their identities, particularly LGBTQ youth of color. Recent incidents at the Belmont Public Schools (E.g. graffiti with racist, anti-semitic, and anti-LGBTQ messages) have highlighted the importance of ongoing supports for affected students, proactive prevention efforts, and accountability for those who engage in marginalization and hate. Not issuing swift consequences communicates that LGBTQ youth are unprotected in our community.

According to [GLSEN](#), formerly the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network, in schools where an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum has been implemented, students report less hostile school experiences and feel more connected to their communities. They report that the school curriculum can serve as a mirror when it is self-affirming to LGBTQ youth and can serve as a window, where members of the community at-large can learn to appreciate the experiences of those with different identities. These mirrors and windows can help create a more positive educational environment for all and a healthier self-concept for LGBTQ youth. Educators can help foster a more inclusive environment by introducing school-wide days of action and visibility, such as GLSEN's Ally Week (September) and No Name-Calling Week (January).

The BHRC is supportive of the efforts by the MA legislature and hopes it will bring more inclusive perspectives into the educational experiences of all students and much needed affirmation to vulnerable LGBTQ youth in our school communities.

The Belmont Human Rights Commission is dedicated to fighting discrimination in all forms and increasing visibility and awareness of issues regarding diversity and discrimination in our community. If you have experienced discrimination in Belmont, please contact us at belmont.hrc@gmail.com or call 617-993-2795.

Sources

An Act Relative to LGBTQ+ Inclusive Curriculum, 192nd Joint Session of the MA Legislature, H.618, (Current). Retrieved from: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/192/H618>

GLSEN (2019). Developing LGBTQ-inclusive classroom resources. Retrieved from: https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/GLSEN_LGBTQ_Inclusive_Curriculum_Resource_2019_0.pdf

Luk, J.W., Goldstein, R.B., Yu, J., Haynie, D.L., & Gilman, S.E. (2021, October). Sexual minority status and age of onset of adolescent suicidal ideation and behavior. *Pediatrics*, 148 (4). Retrieved from: https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/148/4/e2020034900?utm_source=STAT%20Newsletters&utm_campaign=cd059069a2-MR_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-cd059069a2-151389445

Murray, P.J. & Thoma, B.C. (2021, October). Effective screening and treatment to reduce suicide risk among sexual and gender minority youth. *Pediatrics*, 148 (4). Retrieved from: https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/148/4/e2021051831?utm_source=STAT%20Newsletters&utm_campaign=cd059069a2-MR_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-cd059069a2-151389445