



June 21, 2023

Dear Member of Congress,

The undersigned 51 LGBTQI+ justice, gender justice, and education organizations endorse the **LGBTQI+ and Women's History Education Act of 2023** and urge you to co-sponsor this important legislation championed by U.S. Representatives Becca Balint and Ritchie Torres. The LGBTQI+ and Women's History Education Act will provide funds for the Smithsonian National Museum of American History to develop content and programming to support educators providing history instruction that is inclusive of LGBTQI+ people and women and uses an intersectional educational approach. Book bans, curriculum censorship, and other legislative attacks on the LGBTQI+ community, especially transgender women and girls,<sup>1</sup> make it more important than ever that we show strong support for evidence-based educational programming to protect the wellbeing and educational success of marginalized students and foster positive school climates.

Inclusive and culturally affirming learning provides a mirror when it reflects youth and their experiences back to themselves.<sup>2</sup> When youth feel seen and affirmed in assigned readings and classroom learning, they experience improved academic engagement and achievement. GLSEN's *2021 National School Climate Survey* found that LGBTQI+ youth who are taught about LGBTQI+ people, history, or events have higher GPAs, are more likely to plan to pursue post-secondary education, feel a greater sense of belonging, and report higher self-esteem and lower levels of depression, compared to LGBTQI+ youth without access to LGBTQI+-inclusive instruction.<sup>3</sup> The National Women's Law Center 2019 report, *We Are Not Invisible: Latina Girls, Mental Health, and Philadelphia Schools*, found that Latina youth described culturally affirming curriculum as cultivating a sense of belonging and an identity of resilience.<sup>4</sup>

Inclusive and culturally affirming learning provides a window when it introduces and provides the opportunity to understand other people's experiences and perspectives.<sup>5</sup> When youth have access to affirming representations of LGBTQI+ people and women, it promotes a positive school climate that can help prevent sex-based harassment. For example, the *2021 National School Climate Survey* found that LGBTQI+ students with access to LGBTQI+-inclusive curriculum were less

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<sup>1</sup> ACLU. (2023). Mapping Attacks on LGBTQ Rights in U.S. State Legislatures. <https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights>.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, N. J., Koss, M. D., & Martinez, M. (2018). Through the sliding glass door: # EmpowerTheReader. *The Reading Teacher*, 71(5), 569-577.

<sup>3</sup> Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., & Menard, L. (2022). *The 2021 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN. <https://www.glsen.org/research/2021-national-school-climate-survey>.

<sup>4</sup> National Women's Law Center. (2019). *We Are Not Invisible: Latina Girls, Mental Health, and Philadelphia Schools*. <https://nwlc.org/resource/we-are-not-invisible-latina-girls-mental-health-and-philadelphia-schools/>.

<sup>5</sup> Johnson, Koss, & Martinez. Through the sliding glass door: # EmpowerTheReader.

likely to hear biased statements and reported lower rates of victimization based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, many students do not have access to accurate instruction on the history and contributions of LGBTQI+ people and women.<sup>7</sup> The *2021 National School Climate Survey* found that only 16.3% percent of LGBTQI+ secondary students had been taught any positive representations of LGBTQI+ people, history, or events.<sup>8</sup> A 2017 study by the National Women’s History Museum found that social studies standards overwhelmingly emphasize women taking on domestic roles (53% of named women).<sup>9</sup> Subsequent analysis found that only 1 woman is named for every 3 men in social studies curricular standards.<sup>10</sup> Named women do not reflect the diversity of women and their contributions and tend to be white and wealthy.<sup>11</sup> This teaches students that women are less important and influential in all of history, and reinforces the stereotype that a woman’s “place” is in the home, not in public and as leaders in the movements for LGBTQI+, disability, and racial justice.

Although the value of inclusive, culturally affirming education is well understood, the time and resources needed to create or revise curriculum and lesson plans can create a substantial barrier for educators who already have full plates. Adding to these logistical challenges, teachers may feel unsure of how best to incorporate LGBTQI+ and Women’s History using an intersectional educational approach. A 2016 national survey of secondary school teachers found that only one-third (33.1%) reported that they were somewhat or very confident about how to include LGBTQI+ topics.<sup>12</sup> Research suggests there is insufficient professional development available to teachers in this area. A 2016 survey of teacher educators found that, while the majority (80.6%) agreed that including LGBTQI+ people, history, or events in their K-12 curricula or teaching is somewhat or very important, just over 1 in 3 (33.7%) received any professional development on how to do so themselves and a smaller share (28.8%) reported professional development specifically related to LGBTQI+ history or significant LGBTQI+ people in the subject they teach.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Kosciw, et al. The 2021 National School Climate Survey. <https://www.glsen.org/research/2021-national-school-climate-survey>.

<sup>7</sup> The specific instruction and instructional materials provided to students hinge on the decisions of individual school districts, or even individual teachers, and are shaped by state curricular standards. GLSEN. (2022). Inclusive Curricular Standards: Representation of LGBTQ+ and Other Marginalized Communities Promotes Student Achievement and Wellbeing. <https://www.glsen.org/activity/inclusive-curricular-standards>.

<sup>8</sup> 7 states have enacted laws in support of LGBTQI+ inclusive curriculum. GLSEN. (2023). “Inclusive Curricular Standards Policies.” <https://maps.glsen.org/inclusive-curricular-standards-policies/>. 3 states have curricular standards laws that set goals for instruction on women’s history. National Women’s History Alliance. (N.D). Why Our Work Matters. <https://nationalwomenshistoryalliance.org/why-our-work-matters/>.

Recently, state curriculum censorship laws have specifically targeted instruction on LGBTQ+ people and honest teaching about race and gender. Movement Advancement Project. Equality Maps: LGBTQ Curricular Laws. [https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality\\_maps/curricular\\_laws](https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality_maps/curricular_laws). The African American Policy Forum. (N.D.). Welcome to the #TruthBeTold Campaign. <https://www.aapf.org/truthbetold>.

<sup>9</sup> Maurer, Patrick, Britto, & Millar, H. Where Are the Women? <https://www.womenshistory.org/social-studies-standards>.

<sup>10</sup> White, A. (2019, March). What Schools Teach About Women’s History Leaves a Lot to Be Desired. *Smithsonian Magazine*. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-schools-teach-womens-history-180971447/>.

<sup>11</sup> Maurer, Patrick, Britto, & Millar, H. Where Are the Women? <https://www.womenshistory.org/social-studies-standards>.

<sup>12</sup> Greytak, E.A., Kosciw, J.G., Villenas, C. & Giga, N.M. (2016). From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited, A Survey of U.S. Secondary School Students and Teachers. New York: GLSEN. <https://www.glsen.org/research/teasing-torment-school-climate-revisited-survey-us-seconda>.

<sup>13</sup> Clark, C. M. & Kosciw, J. G. (2022). Educating educators: Knowledge, beliefs, and practice of teacher educators on LGBTQ issues. New York: GLSEN. <https://www.glsen.org/teacher-educators>.

The **LGBTQI+ and Women's History Education Act** would help address barriers to inclusive and culturally affirming history instruction by supporting the development and dissemination of high-quality resources and programming on contributions of LGBTQI+ people and women using an intersectional educational approach. We urge you to co-sponsor the LGBTQI+ and Women's History Education Act.

Sincerely,  
GLSEN  
National Women's Law Center

*Joined by:*

AACTE  
Advocates for Youth  
American Association of University Women  
American Atheists  
American Federation of Teachers  
American Psychological Association Services  
American School Counselor Association  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC  
CA LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
CenterLink: The Community of LGBTQ Centers  
EDGE Consulting Partners  
EducateUS: SIECUS In Action  
Education Law Center Pennsylvania  
Education Reform Now  
Equality California  
Family Equality  
FORGE, Inc.  
Gender Spectrum  
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ+ Equality  
GSA Network  
Human Rights Campaign  
interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Legal Momentum, The Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund  
Los Angeles LGBT Center  
Movement Advancement Project  
National Action Network  
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity  
National Association of School Psychologists  
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)  
National Black Justice Coalition

National Center for Parent Leadership, Advocacy, and Community Empowerment (National PLACE)  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)  
National Education Association  
National LGBTQ Task Force  
National Organization for Women  
National Women's Political Caucus  
PFLAG Fresno  
PFLAG National  
PROMO  
School Social Work Association of America  
SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change  
The Education Trust  
The Trevor Project  
Trans Maryland  
True Colors United