



June 20, 2023

Committee on the Judiciary  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the 3 million members of the National Education Association, who are devoted to teaching and nurturing students across America, we appreciate this opportunity to submit these comments for the committee's June 21 hearing, "Protecting Pride: Defending the Civil Rights of LGBTQ+ Americans."

NEA members strive to ensure that all students can learn, grow, and reach their potential. This happens only when students believe they are accepted, respected, and valued regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The same acceptance and respect must hold true for the LGBTQ+ educators who support them.

Unfortunately, laws targeting the rights of transgender individuals are moving our nation in the wrong direction. Lawmakers at all levels should take actions and speak in ways that cultivate respect and understanding; instead, many are stoking fear and hostility. LGBTQ+ individuals feel increasingly threatened—and many transgender people, in particular, feel at risk.

LGBTQ+ citizens must be safe from all forms of discrimination, and passage of the Equality Act would support this goal by:

- Explicitly providing consistent non-discrimination protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity through amending federal laws such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fair Housing Act, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, and the Jury Act.
- Expanding discrimination protections to cover federally funded programs, as well as public accommodations.
- Giving LGBTQ+ educators a greater sense of security in their own schools, which will enable them to help LGBTQ+ students—who are bullied and harassed more often than other students—experience greater security.

In the words of an NEA educator in Florida: "The Equality Act establishes my humanity and would send a powerful message to people who would consider discriminating against me. It would wrap a blanket of protection around young children and also frightened adults who are feeling alone, traumatized, and vulnerable. Sometimes the biggest lesson we can teach our youth is what we, as adults, value. **Do we value diversity, love, and inclusion, or do we value hatred, bigotry, and discrimination?**"

Discrimination against LGBTQ+ citizens violates core American beliefs. We urge you to support passage of the Equality Act and other legislation that would move us forward in the march toward fairness for all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. We must do all we can to protect the civil rights of students, educators, and other community members.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan  
Director of Government Relations  
National Education Association