

TESTIMONY OPPOSING SCHOOL BOARD POLICY 5756

requiring educators to inform parents when students exhibit gender-identity conflict

2023

The following testimony was read by LWVMonmouth members at the School Board meetings in Marlboro, Manalapan, Middletown and Colts Neck.

"This is a testimony on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Monmouth County. The League of Women Voters has a long history of advocating for the rights, health, and education of children. Defending our democracy and ending discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community go hand in hand.

We are gravely concerned with proposed policies that put students' safety and mental health at risk and violate New Jersey's Law Against Discrimination. Public schools are a cornerstone of democracy, and New Jersey should strive to ensure our schools are safe, inclusive, and welcoming for all.

Proposals like this are causing extreme political polarization and are manufactured to divide our communities and increase distrust in public education and civic engagement. Outing children puts them at risk for bullying, harassment, and discrimination. It makes them more vulnerable to self-harm and suicide. Despite arguments otherwise, numerous studies and data show that forced outing to parents is harmful, not helpful, to LGBTQ+ youth.

Here is the bottom-line: if a child is not sharing information about their sexuality or gender identity with their caregivers, those grown-ups should be concentrating on the environment they are fostering within the four walls of their own home instead of attacking and blaming the school where the child might feel safer.

It is important to note that this is not a stand-alone policy, but part of a concentrated effort to undermine public education. In addition to attacks on LGBTQ+ student rights, the campaign includes book bans, attacks on sexual education, and attempts to rewrite American history by prohibiting accurate and necessary conversations about race and equity. The League of Women Voters cannot stand by while a small minority uses our classrooms as political battlegrounds at the expense of our students and our country's future. This is also an attack on our public school educators and has served to drive highly trained, experienced teachers out of the field.

It is time to say NO to these attacks – time to support our educators and stand up for our children. We urge the Board of Education to reject the proposals under consideration tonight."