



October 16, 2018

To: Committee on Education, Council of District of Columbia

Re: B22-0840, the "LGBTQ Health Data Collection Amendment Act of 2018"

To Whom It May Concern,

I write to you today on behalf of The Trevor Project to express our strong support for the "LGBTQ Health Data Collection Amendment Act of 2018." Directly asking questions related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as part of the District's participation in the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System ("BRFSS") and the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System ("YRBSS"), and publishing a detailed annual report on the results, will allow teachers, parents, advocates, and policymakers to do more to save lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) youth.

The Trevor Project is the world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ young people. We work to save young lives through our phone, text, and instant message crisis intervention services. As a leader and innovator in suicide prevention, The Trevor Project also offers the world's largest safe social networking community for LGBTQ youth, best practice suicide prevention educational trainings, resources for youth and adults, and a myriad of advocacy initiatives.

The data collected under the YRBSS on sexual orientation has already proven valuable, and demonstrated that gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth are at greater risk of violent victimization, bullying, and experiencing mental health issues including suicidal ideation.

On June 14, 2018 the CDC released the most recent national [Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) data, including analysis on sexual minority youth. Unfortunately, the national YRBSS only reported sexual orientation data, though some states and the District of Columbia have begun asking questions related to gender identity and gender expression. Some key statistics revealed by this survey include:

- Almost half of all lesbian, gay, and bisexual students seriously consider attempting suicide.
- LGB youth are more than twice as likely to experience persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness than their straight peers.
- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are more than four times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight peers.

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This vital data highlights that suicide is a continued public health crisis for young people in this country, especially among LGBTQ youth, and confirms The Trevor Project's experience as this year alone we have responded to more than 68,000 calls/chats/texts from LGBTQ youth who've reached out for support, hundreds of whom are calling from the District of Columbia.

With the critical information provided through previous survey inclusion of sexual orientation, it is evident that similar inclusion of gender identity and gender expression will be invaluable. Recent analysis in JAMA (The Journal of the American Medical Association) Pediatrics noted that transgender youth were at the highest risk, nearly six times as likely to attempt suicide as cisgender peers. This chilling statistic demonstrates the need for specific enumeration of gender identity and gender expression in data collection. To the extent that future surveys are also inclusive of gender identity and expression, as required by the Act, the data will further illuminate the particular challenges faced by transgender and gender nonconforming youth. Part of making sure these children know that their lives count and they matter, is making sure that their experiences are asked about, documented, and reported on, and implementing appropriate policies based on fully-inclusive data.

CONCLUSION

We strongly urge passage of the "LGBTQ Health Data Collection Amendment Act of 2018." Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to reach out to The Trevor Project with any questions.

Sincerely,



Sam Brinton
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