



PRISM



HEALTH

DA: April 22, 2019
TO: House Committee on Education
FR: Cascade AIDS Project, Prism Health
RE: In support of Senate Bill 52A

Chair Doherty and Members of the House Education Committee:

On behalf of the Cascade AIDS Project and Prism Health, we urge your support for Senate Bill 52A, Adi's Act. The Cascade AIDS Project is Oregon's largest and oldest AIDS Service organization; we have been providing services to individuals living with or affected by HIV for 35 years. Prism Health is our LGBTQ+ focused primary care clinic that provides the community with the safe and affirming health care that they need and deserve. Collectively our mission is to support and empower all people with or affected by HIV, reduce stigma, and provide the LGBTQ+ community with compassionate healthcare. This includes peer support and mental health. In fact, we are working diligently to bring mental health counseling to Prism because we see the need in the communities we serve.

LGBTQ people must confront stigma and prejudice based on their sexual orientation or gender identity while also dealing with the societal bias against mental health conditions. The LGBTQ community is at a higher risk for suicide because we lack peer support and face harassment, mental health conditions and substance abuse. For LGBTQ people aged 10–24, suicide is one of the leading causes of death. LGBTQ youth are 4 times more likely and questioning youth are 3 times more likely to attempt suicide, experience suicidal thoughts or engage in self-harm than straight people.

Because of harassment, bullying and family rejection, LGBTQ youth often have few people to turn to. However, having just one supportive adult can greatly reduce their risk of suicide. Many times, students feel most comfortable confiding in the adults that they interact with every day, including teachers and school personnel since schools play an essential role in our kids' lives. That's why the Cascade AIDS Project and Prism health are in in full support of SB 52A.

Adi's Act will provide all school districts in Oregon with a model suicide prevention policy based on national best practices. In addition, all school districts will be required to have a suicide prevention policy and plan including procedures relating to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention that specifically address youth at higher risk for suicide—like LGBTQ students, youth with disabilities, and youth experiencing homelessness.

Every student in Oregon should be safe, supported, and affirmed while at school. The Cascade AIDS Project and Prism Health strongly support SB 52A and urge this committee's quick action to move the bill to the House floor. Thank you.

With Gratitude,

Peter Parisot

Deputy Executive Director



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