



Madison Metropolitan School District Testimony on AB 469

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Sherie Hohs, the LGBTQ+ Social Worker for the Madison Metropolitan School District, and I am here to testify on behalf of our school district.

I want to start by saying that we are proud of the strong LGBTQ+ communities in our schools. We have incredible students who are leading the way in educating their school communities and ensuring that all students feel safe and respected at school. Our transgender students and the families who support them are an incredibly positive part of our school district.

As a school district, we value inclusive, equitable practices for all students, including our transgender and gender-expansive children. We also value working with our school communities, families and students to make the best decisions to support all students.

I'd like to tell you a little about how our district does that supports our transgender and gender expansive students. First and foremost, when a student transitions, we work collaboratively with the student, their family, and their school to make sure they are safe and affirmed at school.

Specifically, we respect the identities of our students by using their preferred names and pronouns. We respect the privacy of our students by not disclosing personal information unless we have permission from the student and family. We provide bathrooms and changing areas to help students feel safe and affirmed. We educate our students, families, and staff about our non-discrimination and anti-bullying policies that protect LGBTQ+ youth. We offer professional development for educators so we can create inclusive, affirming learning environments for all children. We have been able to implement these policies and practices over the last decade with great success and without backlash.

In fact, families have expressed gratitude that we have policies and practices in place as a district to support and protect their child. Principals and educators report feeling comforted that we as a district offer clear guidance on how best to support and to protect the rights of our transgender and gender expansive youth in MMSD. Most importantly, our transgender and gender expansive students report feeling valued, listened to, and thankful that their identities are affirmed at school and that there are people in their schools who will ensure their safety.

But even with these policies and supports in place, we know that our transgender students face challenges. They are disproportionately the victims of bullying and harassment. They often feel isolated or unsafe – both at school and in other environments.

As a school district, it is our responsibility to support all children and prevent situations where they feel targeted or unsafe – not reinforce them. This bill would a step backwards for our district. In many cases, it would force schools and families to reverse the thoughtful planning and work they have done together in their school community. And it would target a group of children that we already know face discrimination, harassment and bullying.

We ask that you reconsider this bill and the impact it our transgender students. Let us work with our local community, as we have been doing successfully, to support our students. Thank you for your time.