



Support All Students

California's School Success and Opportunity Act

SUPPORTER'S TOOLKIT



"Let's stand together and create a better future for all the young people in this state."

—Catherine Lee, mother of Ashton Lee, and a supporter CA's new School Success and Opportunity Act (AB 1266)

Catherine, with her son Ashton

www.supportallstudents.org



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Introducing the School Success and Opportunity Act (Assembly Bill 1266)

All students should be treated equally in schools, and California's new School Success and Opportunity Act—also known as Assembly Bill 1266 (AB 1266)—will ensure that all students have the same opportunities to be successful.

The School Success and Opportunity Act, signed into law by CA Gov. Jerry Brown on August 12, 2013, ensures that schools administrators understand their responsibility for the success and well-being of all students, and makes sure that parents and students understand their rights.

Despite anti-discrimination laws in place for years, many transgender students— young people whose sex at birth is opposite from who they know they are on the inside—have been wrongly excluded from participating in school-based activities, programs, and facilities because school administrators don't understand the requirement to treat all students equally.

Before the law was passed, many high school administrators were unaware of their obligations to provide all students with the same opportunities to succeed, transgender students are denied the opportunity to fully participate in school activities—like taking part in physical education classes—and are unable to earn the credits they need to graduate.

The School Success and Opportunity Act restates existing anti-discrimination law requiring that transgender students—just like all students—must be provided with a supportive school environment where they have equal opportunities to become successful.

The new law is supported by more than 40 organizations, including the California Teachers Association, the California Federation of Teachers, Parent Teachers Association, the California Association of School Counselors, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, Equality California, Transgender Law Center, GSA Network and Gender Spectrum.

Learn more and get updates at www.supportallstudents.org!



Our Coalition

www.supportallstudents.org

ACLU of California comprises the statewide work of the three California affiliates of the American Civil Liberties Union to protect and defend civil liberties.
www.aclunc.org

Equality California (EQCA) is the largest statewide lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender advocacy organization in California. Over the past decade, Equality California has strategically moved California from a state with extremely limited legal protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people to a state with some of the most comprehensive protections in the nation. Equality California has partnered with legislators to successfully sponsor more than 85 pieces of pro-equality legislation. EQCA continues to advance equality through legislative advocacy, electoral work, public education and community empowerment.
www.eqca.org

Gay-Straight Alliance Network (GSA Network) is a national youth leadership organization that empowers youth activists to fight homophobia and transphobia in schools by training student leaders and supporting student-led Gay-Straight Alliance clubs throughout the country. In California alone, GSA Network has brought GSA clubs to 56% of public high schools, impacting more than 1.1 million students at over 900 schools. GSA Network's youth advocates have played a key role in changing laws and policies that impact youth at the local and state level. GSA Network operates the National Association of GSA Networks, which unites 37 statewide networks of GSA clubs throughout the country. www.gsanetwork.org

Gender Spectrum provides resources, training and support to create gender sensitive and inclusive environments for all children and teens.
www.genderspectrum.org

The National Center for Lesbian Rights is a national legal organization committed to advancing the human and civil rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community through litigation, public policy advocacy, and public education. www.nclrights.org

Transgender Law Center works to change law, policy, and attitudes so that all people can live safely, authentically, and free from discrimination regardless of their gender identity or expression. www.transgenderlawcenter.org



The Facts

What does the School Success and Opportunity Act—Assembly Bill 1266—do?

The purpose of this law is to make the requirements of existing law spelled out explicitly in California statute so school administrators, teachers, parents and students understand their obligations and rights. Those requirements are that all students in California must be allowed to participate fully in school so they can thrive academically and socially.

Despite anti-discrimination laws already in place, many transgender students – young people whose sex at birth is opposite from who they know they are on the inside – are nonetheless improperly excluded from participating in school-based activities, programs, and facilities, and high school students are denied the opportunity to earn the credits they need to graduate.

The School Success and Opportunity Act restates existing anti-discrimination law requiring that transgender students, like all students, be provided with a safe and supportive school environment where they can succeed.

How much will the School Success and Opportunity Act cost?

The School Success and Opportunity Act does not require schools to create new programs or new facilities for any students, so it does not carry a cost. In fact, making sure schools know their responsibilities may help avoid costly lawsuits.

When do schools have to start providing transgender students with equal access to all the school's programs, activities and facilities?

Right now. California and federal law (Cal. Ed. Code § 220 and Title IX) already require schools to treat transgender students equally and fairly by ensuring that they are allowed to participate in sex segregated school programs and use facilities consistent with their gender identity. The School Success and Opportunity Act simply added language to make it clear to everyone that those protections already apply to programs, activities, and facilities that are separated by gender. Many school districts and individual schools throughout California have had equal access policies and practices in place for years that are consistent with California and federal law. For example, Los Angeles Unified School District has had a comprehensive policy for at least eight years that has helped administrators know how to support transgender students.

What programs, activities, and facilities does this law cover?

The School Success and Opportunity Act, just like other existing state and federal non-discrimination laws, requires schools to permit all students to participate in programs and activities consistent with their self-identified gender. Physical education classes, sports teams, restrooms, locker rooms, and any other school event, activity, or program that separates or makes gender-based distinctions among students fall under the requirements of all of these laws and were already covered prior to the passage and signing of the School Success and Opportunity Act. *Continued...*



Does the law cover sports programs?

Yes. Even before the passage and signing of the School Success and Opportunity Act, the California Interscholastic Federation—which governs California school sports programs—adopted the following policy: “All students should have the opportunity to participate in CIF activities in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity, irrespective of the gender listed on a student’s records.”

Similar policies have been adopted in a number of other states, including Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Washington. The CIF policy is also consistent with that of the United States Soccer Federation, which covers more than 8 million athletes in recreational soccer leagues across the United States. Federal law (Title IX) also provides these very same protections for transgender students.

What does the possible referendum introduced by Capital Resource Institute and National Organization for Marriage mean?

Nothing. The possible referendum is another misleading campaign by these hateful groups to hurt marginalized members of our community—this time, young students. The referendum would have absolutely no impact whatsoever, as existing California law and existing federal law already provide that transgender students must be allowed to participate in all school programs and facilities consistent with their gender identity. In a recent victory, the Department of Justice and Department of Education ruled that a student in Arcadia, California must be allowed to participate in all school programs and facilities based on his gender identity under Title IX. So the referendum wouldn’t change a thing and transgender students will remain protected from discrimination.

What are the Capital Resource Institute and the National Organization for Marriage?

The Capital Resource Institute is a small Sacramento hate group with a history of targeting children, women, families, and the LGBT community by purposefully spreading misinformation to the public. The group has a track record for lacking transparency by keeping important information from the public about its efforts, including details about its funding and its failure to provide the IRS with 990 forms for three consecutive years, resulting in the recent revocation of its tax exempt status, which is still in effect. The National Organization for Marriage is an anti-LGBT group that opposes the freedom to marry for same-sex couples and has lost several major ballot measures as the LGBT community gains broad support for equality, dignity and respect. The group is also at the center of a campaign violation investigation for allegedly failing to disclose its donors in its effort to oust Iowa Supreme Court justices, potentially violating Iowa State law.



I Support the School Success and Opportunity Act!

I support the School Success and Opportunity Act's protections for all students, ensuring that transgender students aren't excluded from school programs and facilities.

I support maintaining a policy that has already covered almost one in eight students in California for a decade with zero reported problems.

I stand with more than 40 organizations, including the California Teachers Association, the California Federation of Teachers, Parent Teachers Association, the California Association of School Counselors, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, Equality California, Transgender Law Center, GSA Network and Gender Spectrum in supporting freedom for all students to live authentic lives.

I pledge to Decline to Sign any referendum that would put transgender students at risk of bullying, exclusion and discrimination.

Organization: _____

Organization Representative: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Sponsoring organizations of the School Success and Opportunities Act include Equality California, National Center for Lesbian Rights, American Civil Liberties Union, Gay Straight Alliance Network, Transgender Law Center and Gender Spectrum

Please email completed form to tony@eqca.org
or mail to: Equality California, 8350 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 200, West Hollywood, CA 90069



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Name	_____	
Address	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes! I want to Volunteer
City	_____	State Zip Phone
Email	_____	- -

Name	_____	
Address	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes! I want to Volunteer
City	_____	State Zip Phone
Email	_____	- -

Name	_____	
Address	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes! I want to Volunteer
City	_____	State Zip Phone
Email	_____	- -

Please mail to: Equality California, 8350 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite, 200, West Hollywood, CA 90069
Fax: 323-848-9246



Sample Letters To The Editor—Introduction

Letters to the editor are a great way to shape public discourse on issues that are important to you. The goal of any letter to the editor is to engage, inform, and inspire action in less than 300 words (length varies by media outlet).

In this specific context, your letters should provide your views on why the School Success and Opportunity Act is needed to ensure all students' opportunity and success. The best letters make readers walk away with not only a better understanding of the issue, but with a desire to support the author's efforts. If you are transgender or if you have a transgender friend or relative, be sure to include personal stories on why this law matters to you.

- Most outlets will only publish letters written by people who reside in their circulation areas. Included, you will find two sample letters as well as links to the letters to the editor submission pages for the state's larger media outlets. Additionally, students should remember to submit letters to their campus newspapers.

The submission pages will also provide detailed information on how to submit, with most providing an online form to do so, while others simply ask folks to email the pieces directly to them.

It's important for contributors to read the criteria for the letters before writing.



General Sample Letter-to-Editor

Every student deserves a chance to succeed, but many young people across California are facing obstacles that are blocking their opportunities to be successful. Governor Jerry Brown recently made history by signing the School Success and Opportunity Act (Assembly Bill 1266), a law that ensures school administrators understand their obligation to treat all students—including those who are transgender—the same in school so they can thrive academically.

While anti-discrimination laws are currently in place, young transgender students are still being kept from taking part in school activities, hurting their chances to earn the credits they need to graduate. I truly believe in treating others the way I want to be treated, and that means giving every person—young and older—the dignity, respect, and chance to succeed that I want others to give me, and those in my life.

This new law is a step in the right direction for students who have been marginalized and hurt by adults. All children deserve to be included, supported, and given a fair chance. Let's stand together and create a better future for all the young people in this state. If you see someone gathering signatures to try to repeal the School Success and Opportunity Act, please decline to sign it.



Student Letter-to-Editor

As a student at _____, I want to see all my peers, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, given a fair chance to succeed, especially when it comes to being able to graduate from high school on time and potentially attend college. That's why California's new School Success and Opportunity Act (Assembly Bill 1266), signed by Governor Jerry Brown in August, is so important to me.

While anti-discrimination laws are currently in place, young transgender students are still being kept from taking part in school activities, hurting their chances to earn the credits they need to graduate. I truly believe in treating others the way I want to be treated, and that means giving every person—young and older—the dignity, respect, and chance to succeed that I want others to give me, and those in my life.

Young people like us have a unique voice, and it's up to us to lead the way when it comes to fairness and equality. Please talk to your friends and family about the importance of supporting all students, including transgender students, and if you see someone gathering signatures to try to repeal School Success and Opportunity Act please decline to sign. Discrimination has no home in our schools or in our state.



Parent Sample Letter-to-Editor

As a parent, I want to see all young people given fair chances to succeed, especially when it comes to earning their educations. No parent ever wants to hear stories about children being mistreated in school and blocked from their opportunities to be successful.

That's why California's new School Success and Opportunity Act (Assembly Bill 1266), signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown in August, is so important to me, and it should be to anyone who believes in dignity, fairness, and giving all of our state's young people an equal chance. This new law ensures that all students—including those who are transgender—can succeed in school by making sure officials know their obligations to treat all students equally.

This new law means that, for the first time, many students in our state's schools will be given a chance to be successful—something many have been blocked from due to leaders in our schools not following existing laws. I hope you will stand with me and the many other families who are determined to keep our state moving forward in a positive direction for our young people. If you see someone gathering signatures to try to repeal the School Success and Opportunity Act, please decline to sign it.



Op-Eds are longer than letters to the editor giving more space to tell a story and explain the issue at hand. Here is an excellent example.

Don't Let My Son Lose His Right to a Fair Education

(Published in the Advocate.com)

By Catherine Lee

No parent ever wants his or her children to be mistreated or hurt by anyone, especially by those who want to block their opportunities and success.

But over the last few years, I've often felt powerless in my struggle to help my son navigate through a system that hasn't always been fully supportive of who he is — an ambitious, extremely bright, friendly, and outgoing young transgender man.

When I learned that California governor Jerry Brown signed the School Success and Opportunity Act into law August 12, I was overwhelmed. For the first time, my 16-year-old Ashton will be able to fully participate in his Manteca, Calif., high school under the new law that ensures that school administrators know their requirements to treat all students equally.

The new law ensures that my son and others like him have a fair opportunity to succeed in school and to participate in all school-sponsored programs and activities on an equal basis with other students. A similar policy has been working successfully for years in the Los Angeles Unified School District, where district leaders have seen students excel when they can participate in school as themselves without fear of shame and stigma. This law means so much to me and other parents of transgender students, and it will make our children's lives and future prospects so much safer and brighter.

Sadly, however, almost immediately after Governor Brown signed this important new law, it came under a vicious attack from an extreme fringe group that has repeatedly opposed legal protections for LGBT people and families, and women, in the past. This organization, the Capitol Resource Institute, has a documented record of purposefully spreading misinformation to the public. Now the group is at it again, spreading lies and misinformation about the new law and launching a horrific campaign to demonize transgender children. This is despicable. As the parent of a transgender child, I feel a deep responsibility to speak out against these appalling and hateful tactics.

In addition to propagating hatred against a group of vulnerable children, the institute is also violating the law. My son and I recently filed a complaint with the California attorney general's office after learning that the institute is soliciting donations as a tax-exempt organization even though the IRS revoked its tax-exempt status months ago for failing to submit proper financial information for three years.

California is a diverse state with a deep commitment to supporting all young people and giving them an equal chance to succeed. We have made so much progress toward healing the bitter wounds that were created by the Proposition 8 campaign, and now we are moving forward together toward a new day. Especially at this moment of new unity and hope, there is no place in our state for groups that deliberately seek to spread hatred and fear — and that deceive the public even about their own tax status. Make no mistake, the Capitol Resource Institute's campaign to overturn the new law is not only mean-spirited, it is dangerous. By fomenting a climate in which differences are seen as threatening, the institute is putting all of our children at risk.

In the weeks ahead, I hope you will stand with me and my son and the many other families who are determined to keep our state moving forward in a positive direction. All children deserve inclusion and support — and a chance to succeed. Let's stand together and create a better future for all the young people in this state.

CATHERINE LEE resides in Manteca, Calif., with her son, Ashton.

Catherine Lee lives in Manteca with her son.

URLs FOR NEWSPAPER LETTER SUBMISSIONS

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA NEWSPAPERS

San Jose Mercury News (150 word limit)

Email letters@mercurynews.com

(<http://www.mercurynews.com/letters>)

San Francisco Chronicle (200 word limit)

<http://www.sfgate.com/chronicle/submissions/#1>

Contra Costa Times (175 word limit) *Includes info on submitting to outlets that span the tri-county region*

<http://www.conracoostatimes.com/letters>

Sacramento Bee (150 word limit)

<http://www.sacbee.com/2006/09/07/19629/submit-letters-to-the-editor.html>

Modesto Bee (200 word limit)

<http://www.modbee.com/2007/02/12/1354/submit-a-letter-to-the-editor.htm>

Marin Independent Journal (250 word limit)

Email opinion@marinij.com

(<http://www.marinij.com/letters>)

Santa Rosa Press-Democrat (200 word limit)

Email letters@pressdemocrat.com

(<http://www.pressdemocrat.com/section/opinion02>)

Santa Cruz Sentinel (150 word limit)

<http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/submitletters>

Salinas Californian (No stated word limit, keep it under 200)

<http://www.thecalifornian.com/section/CUSTOMERSERVICE03?odyssey=mod|dnmiss|umbrella|2>

CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA NEWSPAPERS

Stockton Record (250 word limit)

<http://services.esanjoaquin.com/reader-services/submissions/letter-to-editor/>

Fresno Bee (200 word limit)

<http://www.fresnobee.com/email/>

Sacramento Bee (150 word limit)

<http://www.sacbee.com/2006/09/07/19629/submit-letters-to-the-editor.html>

Hanford Sentinel

Email editor@hanfordsentinel.com, and cc

kcoates@HanfordSentinel.com

(<http://www.hanfordsentinel.com/news/opinion/mailbag/>)

Porterville Recorder (250 word limit)

<http://www.recorderonline.com/sections/editor-form/>

Bakersfield Californian (250 word limit)

<http://www.bakersfieldcalifornian.com/opinion/submit>

San Luis Obispo Tribune (200 word limit)

Email letters@thetribunenews.com

(<http://www.sanluisobispo.com/opinion/index.html>)

Ventura County Star (300 word limit)

Email letters@venturacountystar.com

(<http://www.vcstar.com/news/opinion/letters/>)

Santa Barbara News-Press (250 word limit)

Email voices@newspress.com

(<http://www.newspress.com/npsite/letterspolicy.html>)

Long Beach Press Telegram (No stated word limit, keep it under 150)

Email speakout@presstelegram.com

(<http://www.presstelegram.com/letters>)

Riverside Press-Enterprise (No stated word limit, keep it under 200)

Email letters@pe.com

(<http://www.pe.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor-headlines/>)

San Bernardino County Sun (No stated word limit, keep it under 300)

Email voice@inlandnewspapers.com

(<http://www.sbsun.com/letters/>)

U-T San Diego (No stated word limit, keep it under 200)

Email letters@utsandiego.com

(<http://www.utsandiego.com/news/opinion/letters/>)

LA Times (150 word limit)

<http://www.latimes.com/la-op-email-form.0,5759779.customform>

Orange County Register (200 word limit)

Email letters@ocregister.com

(<http://letters.ocregister.com/>)