

PROTECT LGBT YOUTH FROM BULLYING (SUPPORT HB 64)

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Kentucky needs effective policies for addressing behavior that denies any student access to educational opportunities. The Kentucky Fairness Alliance has joined youth advocates, law enforcement leaders, and educators in an effort to end bullying in Kentucky's primary and secondary schools. The School Bullying Bill (HB 64) gives local educators tools for dealing with harassment and intimidation against any student, including those who are targeted because of their perceived or actual sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.

The School Bullying bill directs school officials to apply the rules "without partiality or discrimination." The coalition behind this effort agrees that the bill will require officials to respond to anti-gay bullying as they would any other form of harassment or violence. Passing the bill will make Kentucky's schools safer for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students.

The Kentucky Fairness Alliance **supports this year's School Bullying Bill (HB 64)**, although we believe it would be even stronger if it prohibited harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression explicitly.

TALKING POINTS

- The School Bullying Bill **protects all students**—gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight, transgender, questioning, or gender-nonconforming—from violence and intimidation at school.
- The coalition supporting the 2006 School Bullying Bill included over 30 organizations, clergy of many denominations, activists, teachers, school administrators, law enforcement, and Fairness leaders.
- A national poll found that **65% of teens were verbally or physically assaulted** in 2005.
 - **33% reported harassment** because they are perceived to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual.
 - **90% of LGBT students** were harassed or assaulted, and they were 3 times as likely as non-LGBT students to say they do not feel safe at their school (GLSEN, 2005).
 - Nearly **one-fifth (17.6%)** had been physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation.
 - **Over a tenth (11.8%)** suffered physical assault because of their gender expression.
- In another national poll, **55% of transgender youth** reported being physically harassed at school because of their gender expression. (GLSEN, 2003)
- Bullying prevention is crime prevention. One study found that 60% of middle school bullies had at least one criminal conviction by age 24 (Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2003).
- A Secret Service study of school shootings found that almost 75% of the attackers felt bullied or persecuted prior to the incident (Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2003).
- Most (73%) secondary school teachers strongly agree that they have an obligation to ensure a safe learning environment for LGBT students (GLSEN, 2005). **Kentucky needs a law that lets teachers stand up to bullying of all kinds**, whether it's based on appearance, race, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.
- Currently in Kentucky, school personnel can lose their jobs because of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Adults who speak out against anti-gay harassment in school run the risk of being labeled gay or pro-gay. The Anti-Bullying Bill requires all school personnel to take responsibility for stopping harassment and violence, regardless of the reason.