

June 10, 2026

The Honorable Tim Walberg
Chairman
Education and Workforce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member
Education and Workforce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Walberg, Ranking Member Scott, and Members of the Committee:

We, the undersigned organizations for parents, families, guardians, and caregivers, urge you to fight for and expand policies that ensure safe and inclusive schools for all students. Every parent wants to see their child thrive at school and be treated with respect and dignity. We strongly believe that educating children is a team effort, requiring trust and collaboration between families, teachers, and school staff to nurture and realize children's full potential. **We, therefore, write in strong opposition to the false narrative that pits parents and schools against each other, and we reject the notion that parents' rights are in any tension with safe and inclusive schools for all.**

Parents and caregivers have always and will continue to play a crucial role in supporting student achievement and strengthening public education. A strong majority of parents—70 percent—are already satisfied with the amount of say that they have in their child's education, and parents are nearly unanimous in supporting initiatives to improve belonging in the school community.¹ But, in recent years, top-down policy efforts to restrict inclusion in public schools, particularly restrictions targeting students of color, LGBTQ+ students, immigrant students, and students with disabilities, have cloaked themselves in purported concern for parental input while actually disrupting our school communities.

We write today to make clear that those pushing against safe and inclusive schools do not speak for all parents. Indeed, this wave of restrictive and exclusionary school policies has prioritized certain perspectives at the expense of broad input, specialized support, or thoughtful long-term policies, and has ultimately “empower[ed] a vocal and politically organized *minority* of parents while simultaneously disempowering everyone else.”² As schools have censored diverse content in classroom instruction and eroded school-based supports, marginalized students face disproportionate burdens in accessing their full

¹ John G. Hendron, “The 57th Annual PDK Poll on Public Attitudes Toward Public Education,” PDK International (2025), <https://pdkpoll.org/2025-poll-results/>.

² Jonathan Friedman, Samantha LaFrance, and Kasey Meehan, “Educational Intimidation,” PEN America (Aug. 2023), <https://pen.org/report/educational-intimidation/>.

educational opportunity—especially students of color, transgender and gender-expansive students, immigrant students, and students with disabilities.

The inclusive policies currently being rolled back or targeted were originally crafted to address parental concerns, especially around student safety and well-being. However, the effort to revert to exclusionary school policies robs children of vital school supports and exacerbates the social isolation and in-school violence faced by marginalized students. For example, in 2024, FBI data found that anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes in K-12 schools *more than quadrupled* in states that adopted restrictive laws.³ These hostile educational environments worsen student mental health, with marginalized students reporting disproportionate rates of depression, anxiety, and attempted suicide.⁴

Accordingly, the parents and caregivers represented by our many organizations are increasingly concerned about the reversal of inclusive policies and the increased surveillance or prohibition of certain curricular decisions, school library content, and even everyday interactions between teachers and students.⁵ For example, since 2021, there have been more than 22,800 instances of book banning in public schools, largely censoring stories that depict racial and gender diversity.⁶ In 2025, only 3% of book challenges originated from individual parents; instead, over 90% of book challenges were initiated by

³ Laura Meckler et al., “In States with Laws Targeting LGBTQ Issues, School Hate Crimes Quadrupled,” *Washington Post* (Mar. 13, 2024), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2024/03/12/school-lgbtq-hate-crimes-incidents/>.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Youth Mental Health: The Numbers (Nov. 29, 2024), <https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-youth/mental-health/mental-health-numbers.html>; see also The Trevor Project, 2025 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People (2026), <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2025/> (finding that 90% of LGBTQ+ young people said recent anti-LGBTQ+ policies caused them stress or anxiety and that 40% of trans young people seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year); Carolyn Jones, “Black youth face rising rates of depression, anxiety, suicide,” EdSource (Jan. 25, 2022) (finding that the suicide rate among Black youth in California doubled since 2014 and is now twice the statewide average); see also The AAKOMA Project, State of Mental Health of Youth and Young Adults of Color (May 2025), https://aakomaproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/AAKOMA_SOMHYOC-2025-full-report.pdf.

⁵ See Freedom to Choose, FCS – 2025 Education Issues Poll (July 2025), https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PTgop_R0QUaz5k-Ue3nckH13qXFnt5SP/view (finding that 68% of Black and Hispanic parents considered political interference in curricular decisions a major obstacle to a good education and 81% of Black parents considering erasing Black history and banning books a major obstacle).

⁶ Sabrina Baêta et al., “The Normalization of Book Banning,” PEN America (Oct. 2025), <https://pen.org/report/the-normalization-of-book-banning/>; Kasey Meehan et al., “Banned in the USA: Beyond the Shelves,” PEN America (Nov. 2024), <https://pen.org/report/beyond-the-shelves/>; Kasey Meehan et al., “Banned in the USA: The Mounting Pressure to Censor,” PEN America (Sept. 2023), <https://pen.org/report/book-bans-pressure-to-censor/>; Jonathan Friedman et al., “Banned in the USA: The Growing Movement to Censor Books in Schools,” PEN America (Sept. 2022), <https://pen.org/report/banned-usa-growing-movement-to-censor-books-in-schools/>.

pressure groups and government officials.⁷ Teachers have been fired for simply recognizing a child's humanity by referring to them by a chosen name and pronouns.⁸ Some schools even required parents to sign a permission slip before letting their children participate in a Black History Month activity.⁹

Reversing inclusive policies ultimately harms our children and undermines the efficient operation of our schools. In 2024, a survey of nearly 500 school superintendents found that roughly two-thirds of school districts were dealing with moderate to high levels of conflict targeting inclusive school policies or instruction, such as contentious school board meetings, harassment of staff or students, and vandalism.¹⁰ There is a real cost to these hostile environments, with experts estimating that public schools spent more than \$3.2 billion in the 2023-24 school year alone to deploy additional security and manage the communications and legal work necessary to address challenges to inclusive school policies or instruction.¹¹

As organizations for parents and caregivers who advocate for inclusive school policies that serve all students, we write today to say enough is enough. Inclusive school policies are necessary steps to assure the safety and well-being of our children. There are real costs—to students, to families, and to taxpayers—when inclusive policies are rolled back and replaced with exclusionary ones. We collectively urge that you prioritize safe and inclusive school strategies to ensure that children and their families are given the tools they need to grow, thrive, and succeed in America's schools.

Sincerely,

National Women's Law Center
PFLAG National
Red Wine & Blue
MomsRising
National Parents Union

⁷ American Library Ass'n, Censorship by the Numbers: Banned Books Data (Apr. 2026), <https://www.ala.org/bbooks/book-ban-data>.

⁸ Alaa Elassar, "A Florida teacher called a student by their preferred name without parental permission. Her teaching contract wasn't renewed," *CNN* (Apr. 12, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/04/12/us/florida-teacher-fired-preferred-name>.

⁹ CBS News, "Miami-Dade parents had to sign permission slips for their children to take part in Black History Month activity" (Feb. 16, 2024), <https://www.cbsnews.com/miami/news/miami-dade-parents-had-to-sign-permission-slips-for-their-children-to-take-part-in-black-history-month-activity/>.

¹⁰ John Rogers et al., The Costs of Conflict: The Fiscal Impact of Culturally Divisive Conflict on Public Schools in the United States," UCLA Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access (Oct. 2024), <https://idea.gseis.ucla.edu/publications/files/costs-of-conflict-report>.

¹¹ *Id.*

Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools
Called to Love
EdTrust
EducateUS
Families for Strong Public Schools
Academy for Social-Emotional Learning in School
PFLAG Acworth/Dallas
PFLAG Aiken
PFLAG Angleton/Lake Jackson
PFLAG Athens, TN
PFLAG Athens Area, GA
PFLAG Austin
PFLAG Baltimore
PFLAG Beaufort, SC-PFLAG Savannah, GA
PFLAG Bowie
PFLAG Brooksville
PFLAG Canton/Stark County, OH
PFLAG Charleston, SC
PFLAG Chautauqua
PFLAG Clayton-Concord
PFLAG Coeur d'Alene/Kootenai County
PFLAG Columbus, Ohio
PFLAG Danville-San Ramon Valley
PFLAG Dayton
PFLAG Deerfield, IL
PFLAG Detroit
PFLAG Enfield
PFLAG Fort Collins
PFLAG Flat Rock/Hendersonville, NC
PFLAG Franklin-Hampshire
PFLAG Gainesville, FL
PFLAG Grayslake/Round Lake
PFLAG Greater Boston
PFLAG Greater Providence
PFLAG Greater St. Louis
PFLAG Greater Twin Cities South
PFLAG Greensboro
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PFLAG Hannibal/Quincy
PFLAG Hartford

PFLAG Ithaca-Cortland
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PFLAG Lexington-Fayette County
PFLAG Lubbock
PFLAG Moraga/Lamorinda
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PFLAG Woodstock