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Testimony to Pittsburgh Public Schools Board of Directors

Submitted by the Education Law Center

November 21, 2022

The Education Law Center submits this testimony in support of the proposed Resolution Opposing Harmful Legislation introduced by Director Devon Taliaferro.

Welcoming and affirming schools provide books and materials that allow students to see themselves and give them the opportunity to learn and explore the world and experiences of others. Providing children with an education that honors their history and experiences gives them a safe space to learn and prepares them to fully participate in a diverse society. The proposed legislation would impede the District's ability to provide its students with an honest and inclusive curriculum. The bills seek to ban books, limit the teaching of accurate history, threaten teachers with lawsuits, and attempt to silence the voices of LGBTQ+ families and people of color.

SB 1277, SB 1278, SB 2813 would create a hostile environment for LGBTQ+ youth, expose teachers to lawsuits, and create a wedge between students and the people they learn from and rely on, including counselors, nurses, and teachers. These bills contend that sexual orientation and gender identity are merely ideas, ignoring the fact that gay and transgender students are real people, and in doing so they erase and dehumanize gay and transgender children and their parents.

HB 1532 seeks to intimidate teachers and prevent discussions of current events or American history, conversations that students need to be prepared for adulthood and become informed critical thinkers. We condemn legislative attempts to prohibit students from learning about racism and the impact of racial, sex, and gender inequality on policies and structures across our nation. A quality education requires a curriculum that teaches students the true history of our nation – the good and the bad – so our children can see how far we have come while also learning about how to build an equitable future for all of us.

We urge the Board to adopt the proposed Resolution against these bills and other similar bills we expect to be introduced at the next legislative session and we applaud the District for its policies and practices that prohibit discrimination against all students and that confirm the District's commitment to teaching truthful history.

Submitted by,

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