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Education Law Center-PA Defends Students' Rights to Inclusive Schools, Honest Education; Education Issues Are Hotly Contested in Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania has been deeply impacted by the work of extremist hate groups: they have pressured school boards to pass book bans that target queer stories and authors; to rewrite the curriculum to erase the true history of Black, Brown, and LQBTQ+ people; and to pass policies that exclude transgender students from full participation in our schools. Pennsylvania ranks third in the nation in book bans.

The Education Law Center-PA (ELC) is supporting protest actions this week in response to the "Moms for Liberty" gathering in Philadelphia as part of our ongoing Inclusive Schools and Honest Education initiative to ensure that public schools are welcoming and supportive for all students, that students' freedom to learn is honored, and that all students' fundamental educational rights are respected. On Thursday afternoon, June 29, ELC will join with Campaign for Our Shared Future and other allies in Center City Philadelphia to distribute free copies of books that have been banned in U.S. schools.

Moms for Liberty is meeting right before the 4th of July in the birthplace of our American democracy. "Despite their name, a commitment to liberty is eerily absent," said Ashli-Giles Perkins, ELC attorney. "For the last year and more across the Commonwealth, our public schools have been plagued by attacks on truth; queer students have been targeted, isolated, and subject to unreasonable restrictions that are rooted in hate and in fear. The diversity and differences that we celebrate across America are severely at risk."

"This is what organizations like Moms for Liberty do to our communities," Giles-Perkins said. "They harm us. They try to silence us. And they have the potential to divide us – when we need to be working together to create school communities that are welcoming and inclusive for *all* of our children."

Learn more about ELC's Inclusive Schools and Honest Education initiative at bit.ly/ELCinclusiveschools. Through fact sheets, trainings, legal advice, and advocacy, ELC helps students and families understand and defend their education rights. Some examples of our work in Pennsylvania school districts:

- In Hempfield (Lancaster Co.), ELC assisted parents fighting transgender students' exclusion from sports.
- In South Side Area, ELC supported students' rights to use their names and pronouns.
- In Central Bucks, ELC helped the community challenge the banning of pride flags and censoring of educators.

The Education Law Center-PA (ELC) is a nonprofit, legal advocacy organization with offices in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, dedicated to ensuring that all children in Pennsylvania have access to a quality public education. Through legal representation, impact litigation, community engagement, and policy advocacy, ELC advances the rights of underserved children, including children living in poverty, children of color, children in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, children with disabilities, English learners, LGBTQ students, and children experiencing homelessness. For more information, visit elc-pa.org or @edlawcenterpa on Twitter.