



Narissa Rahaman (she/her)
Executive Director

equalityvirginia.org

November 22, 2022

Virginia Department of Education
Superintendent Jillian Balow
James Monroe Bldg., 25th Floor
101 N. 14th St. Richmond, VA 23219

Re: Proposed 2022 Model Policies on the Privacy, Dignity, and Respect for All Students in Virginia's Public Schools

Dear Governor Youngkin and Superintendent Balow,

As Executive Director of Equality Virginia (EV), I am writing to you on behalf of the entire organization and Board of Directors. EV is the leading advocacy organization in Virginia seeking equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people (LGBTQ+) in all corners of our Commonwealth. In light of the recent mass shooting at Club Q in Colorado Springs, CO, I am urging you to rescind the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) proposed 2022 model policies on the Privacy, Dignity, and Respect for All Students in Virginia's Public Schools (Model Policies).

On Sunday November 20th, a day already marked by grief, the LGBTQ+ community woke up to the nightmare that five of our community members were killed - at least 25 injured, and many more impacted - in an attack on Club Q, a queer nightclub in Colorado Springs. Sunday also marked Transgender Day of Remembrance & Resilience (TDoRR) - a day when we honor our trans siblings whose lives have been lost to anti-trans violence.

LGBTQ+ people make decisions everyday whether to choose joy, happiness and abundance over safety. I always choose abundance. Sadly, far too many LGBTQ+ people do not have access to the safety we deserve to thrive. We are robbed of the opportunity to fully access the joy many others experience. Still, our light shines so bright.

Anti-LGBTQ+, specifically anti-transgender, policies that attempt to strip away our human rights, push us back into the margins, and erase us from society are cruel and contribute to the anger and violence trans people in Virginia needlessly endure. The proposed model VDOE policies feed into that violence by targeting trans youth: erasing their stories from classrooms; blocking them from playing sports; and forcing educators to deadname, misgender, and out them to their parents. After this week's tragic mass shooting in Colorado Springs, now is the time to stop the misinformation, transphobia and rhetoric that fuels such violence.



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We continue to be attacked in our bars and at our Pride events, in the places we call home and where we find safety and community with our chosen family. I'm urging you to do the right thing and rescind the proposed VDOE 2022 model policies. The safety of all LGBTQ+ Virginians depends on you doing the right thing.

The crisis our transgender and non-binary community is facing is urgent and must be met with urgency. Rescinding the policies now will help save lives.

On behalf of Equality Virginia and our Board of Directors,

Narissa Rahaman (she/her)
Executive Director
Equality Virginia