



RACHAEL A. CABRAL-GUEVARA

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 55TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Education

Representative Rachael Cabral-Guevara

September 16th, 2021

Chairman Thiesfeldt and Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing me to testify on AB562, an important bill that provides much needed transparency as it relates to the sexual education of Wisconsin students and their families.

Assembly Bill 562 is a very straightforward bill. The purpose of the bill is to simply give as much power and transparency to parents in regards to the sexual education of their children. This bill obligates schools to give notice of any sexual orientation, gender, and gender identity curriculum or program to parents or guardians before the program or curriculum is provided to the student. A student may not be required to participate in any program or curriculum related to sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity if the student's parent or guardian submits a written request to opt out the program or curriculum.

Parents know their children the best, and parents should have the final say when it comes to sexual education, something that has historically been taught in the home or in church. This bill not only allows the parents to have more control over their child's education, it also increases the transparency of our educational system, which benefits everyone.

The education of our children is vital to the prosperity of our respective communities. Parents deserve to know what their children are being taught ahead of time, and if a program or curriculum conflicts with a family's values, we must allow parents to take their student out of the program without causing negative repercussions to the student. Parents are ultimately in charge of their child's education and this bill simply reaffirms that belief.

Thank you again for your time. I am hopeful you are able to support this piece of legislation.



DONNA M. ROZAR

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 69TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Office: (608) 267-0280
Toll Free: (888) 534-0069
Rep.Rozar@legis.wi.gov

P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708-8953

Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Education

AB 562

September 16, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Thiesfelt, Vice-Chair Kitchens, and members of the Health Committee for allowing me to testify on AB 562. This bill provides transparency about what is being taught to K-12 students as it relates to sexual education, and allows the parent or guardian to opt their child out of a program that would conflict with their belief system.

Assembly Bill 572 gives the power to the parent or guardian in regards to the education of sexuality issues to their child. This bill requires each school board of a school district and each operator of an independent charter school, to give notice of any program related to sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or gender expression to a pupil's parent or guardian. This notice is required for grades K-12. A student may not be required to participate in a program with the aforementioned topics if the pupil's parent or guardian submits a written request to opt out of the program.

Parents or guardians should have the final say when it comes to the sexual education of their child. Parents or guardians must be in charge of their child's sexual education and this bill simply affirms that fact. It is a straightforward bill that provides transparency, allowing for parents or guardians to remove their child from curricular content that does not align with their family values.

Thank you for your time and support of this bill. I will be glad to answer any questions.

FRANCESCA HONG
State Representative · 76th Assembly District

September 16, 2021

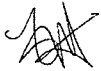
Chair Thiesfeldt, Vice-Chair Kitchens and honorable committee members,

On Tuesday, Rep. Cabral-Guevara introduced AB 562, a bill that would allow parents to opt their students out of gender identity and sexual orientation programming in schools. The only purpose of this bill is to attack Wisconsin kids, and specifically Madison kids.

To Rep. Cabral-Guevara and all those in support, if you want to truly help take care of our children, keep your harmful mandates out of our state and stay in your lane. This bill is an invasion of our student's privacy & caters to intolerance & disrespect.

Our office will always prioritize the agency and individual choice of Wisconsin's youth. We affirm that LGBTQ+ lives are deserving of dignity and security.

Respectfully,



Representative Francesca Hong

76th Assembly District



TO: Assembly Committee on Education
FROM: Representative Lee Snodgrass, Chair of the LGBTQ+ Legislative Caucus
Representative Greta Neubauer, Member of the LGBTQ+ Legislative Caucus
Representative Mark Spreitzer, Member of the LGBTQ+ Legislative Caucus
Representative Marisabel Cabrera, Member of the LGBTQ+ Legislative Caucus
Senator Tim Carpenter, Member of the LGBTQ+ Legislative Caucus
DATE: September 16, 2021
RE: Joint Written Testimony in Opposition to Assembly Bill 562

Chairman Thiesfeldt and members of the Assembly Committee on Education,

We offer our testimony today in strong opposition to Assembly Bill 562. AB 562 continues a long-standing trend of legislative overreach targeting LGBTQ+ youth by singling out curriculum, instruction, or discussion of gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation in Wisconsin schools for overly burdensome regulation.

By targeting discussion relating to gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation in Wisconsin classrooms, AB 562 will prevent all students from gaining a fuller understanding of themselves and their peers, regardless of gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation.

Schools are a place where students can seek answers and support beyond what they find in their household. Denying students access to information, validation, and support regarding gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation can have devastating consequences for student mental health and overall well-being.

Comprehensive curriculum on human growth and development, including sexual development and gender expression, should be presented with the same respect as instruction in any other core subject. Rather than teaching students to engage thoughtfully with new perspectives and concepts, AB 562 incentivizes parents to yo-yo children in and out of classrooms.

We also have substantial concerns regarding the way in which this bill was introduced and noticed for a hearing, which veers from established norms and values to which this body professes to adhere. Good governance allows ample time for public input, participation, and vetting. The rapid introduction and fast-tracking of AB 562 prevents many educators, parents, students, and organizations from being able to participate in the committee process and voice their thoughts on this proposed legislation.

As legislators, it is our duty to ensure all children in Wisconsin feel welcome in our schools and receive accurate, clear, and comprehensive education about a wide variety of issues. Under the guise of "parental control", this bill will further marginalize vulnerable students, deny their peers important information and perspectives, and sow needless division in classrooms across Wisconsin.

In light of the issues with this bill and the lack of time allowed for public engagement in the committee process, we strongly urge the committee to reject AB 562. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Lee Snodgrass
State Representative
57th Assembly District

Greta Neubauer
State Representative
66th Assembly District

Mark Spreitzer
State Representative
45th Assembly District

Marisabel Cabrera
State Representative
9th Assembly District

Tim Carpenter
State Senator
3rd Senate District



WISCONSIN FAMILY ACTION
Marriage|Family|Life|Liberty

PO Box 7486 • Madison WI 53707-7486
608-268-5074 (Madison) • 866-849-2536 (toll-free) • 608-256-3370 (fax)
info@wifamilyaction.org • www.wifamilyaction.org

**TESTIMONY ON ASSEMBLY BILL 562
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2021
JULAIN K. APPLING, PRESIDENT**

Thank you, Chairman Thiesfeldt and Education Committee members, for the opportunity to submit by email this testimony on Assembly Bill 562. I regret that I am not able to attend the hearing today because of a previously scheduled out-of-state obligation.

Wisconsin Family Action supports this bill on a provisional basis. We regret that the short notice we were given did not allow for a more thorough analysis of the bill or give us the opportunity to build a greater case on its behalf.

The importance of having parents involved in their child's education cannot be overstated. Topics such as sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression are no exception and are actually issues demanding higher scrutiny and greater opportunity for parents to know what is being taught and promoted.

These issues by their nature deal with human sexuality, including sexuality expressed outside the bonds of a natural marriage, which is a marriage between one man and one woman. These are topics that parents rightly have a great and direct interest in. As their children's first and most important teachers, they are desirous that they, rather than a teacher or other school district employee be the ones discussing these matters, which are distinctly value- and ethics-laden, in addition to being "hot-button" cultural and political issues.

While parents may choose a public school as an educational partner, parents retain the responsibility to make decisions that are in the best interest of their children both in school and out of school. Parents can only effectively make such decisions if they are aware of what is being taught in the classrooms and in the school in general. This bill is intended to better inform and involve parents in our public schools, and we applaud the effort.

Assembly Bill 562 actually highlights the overall need for schools to make curricular and instructional materials much more transparent and easily accessed, such as that proposed in Assembly Bill 488, which had a public hearing last month. While AB 562 details that the notice to parents about programs related to sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression must include "information on how the parent or guardian may inspect all materials, curriculum, and other components of the program," this does not necessarily mean it will be easy for parents to actually "inspect" the materials. We would recommend that "all materials, curriculum and other components of the program" be required to be accessible through the home page of a district's internet site. The burden for accessing the materials should not be nearly exclusively on the parents; the district must be made to bear a sizeable amount of the burden by making access as easy as possible. Parents can make knowledgeable decisions in the best interest of their children if they have accurate and complete knowledge as to what will be taught, the materials used, and any other information related to the "program."

In addition, we are concerned that the bill does not specifically address school assemblies or special speakers. As "program" is defined, one would have to interpret "instruction" and/or "activity" to include such situations. We believe schools looking for a way to avoid the provisions in this bill could possibly deem a school assembly with a special speaker who is presenting on one of the topics enumerated in AB 562 as not being included in the definition of "program" and thus not requiring parental notification. If Legislative Council could clarify whether

the current language would include such school assembly/special speaker situations, that would be helpful moving forward with this bill.

We also highly recommend requiring that parents intentionally opt their children *in* to any program (or assembly/special speaker) related to sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or gender expression, rather than having to opt them *out* of such a program as the bill currently provides. This change, which means no student can attend without his/her parent's/guardian's affirmative permission offers a better safeguard for both parents and students.

While we have some recommendations for improving the bill, we definitely support it as an earnest effort to begin protecting students from being exposed to subject matter that is best left to the discretion of parents. The more parents know, the better decisions they can make for their children.

Again, thank you for affording us the opportunity to submit this testimony electronically. We will have a representative of our organization go the hearing and register Wisconsin Family Action as being in favor of (not speaking) Assembly Bill 562.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions about this testimony or our position on AB 562.



September 16, 2021

To: Representative Thiesfeldt, Chair, Representative Kitchens, Vice-Chair, and the members of the **Assembly Committee on Education:** Representative Wittke, Representative Ramthun, Representative Wichgers, Representative Mursau, Representative Duchow, Representative Rozar, Representative Behnke, Representative Pope, Representative Hebl, Representative Considine, Representative Vruwink, and Representative L. Myers.

Re: **AB 562: Opposition**

Dear Members of the Assembly Committee on Education:

Please include this testimony as part of the official bill record. I am writing on behalf of FORGE, a 27-year-old statewide transgender antiviolence organization headquartered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in opposition to the above-referenced bill.

The proposed legislation undermines the purpose of Wisconsin's schools, which are charged and entrusted with ensuring that youth are provided with the opportunities for growth, learning, and development necessary to build a supportive foundation for the rest of their lives. Awareness and understanding of diversity of identity and thought, whether one agrees or not, is a critical component of navigating our world and maintaining a society built upon mutual respect.

Prohibiting teachers—as the bill expressly does—from even responding to student inquiries that “relate” to sexual orientation or gender identity/expression additionally undermines the safety of our schools for all students who will receive the resounding message that select matters fundamental to human identity and existence are off-limits, or worse, just plain wrong.

For LGBTQ+ youth, and gender-diverse youth particularly, these messages can be utterly devastating. Research demonstrates that support from adults, and recognition and affirmation of children's and youth's gender identities, are powerful protective factors that mitigate both depression and suicidality for LGBTQ+ youth. Acceptance from ONE supportive adult, like a teacher, coach, or other school staff member, correlates with a decrease in suicide attempts in LGBTQ+ youth from over 25% to 17%.¹ This bill, however, mandates precisely the opposite of what we know Wisconsin's LGBTQ+ youth need in order to survive and thrive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shelley Gregory".

Shelley Gregory
Strategic Project Coordinator

¹ The Trevor Project. Research Brief: Accepting Adults Reduce Suicide Attempts Among LGBTQ Youth. (Jun. 27, 2019), <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/2019/06/27/research-brief-accepting-adults-reduce-suicide-attempts-among-lgbtq-youth/>.



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TESTIMONY ON ASSEMBLY BILL 562: PARENTAL NOTIFICATION OF PROGRAMS RELATED TO SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER, GENDER IDENTITY, OR GENDER EXPRESSION

Presented to the Assembly Committee on Education

By Kim Vercauteren, Executive Director

September 16, 2021

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops of Wisconsin, urges you to support Assembly Bill 562, which requires public school boards and operators of independent charter schools to give notice to parents or guardians regarding any programs related to sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or gender expression.

Human sexuality and expression are both intensely personal and social, impacting children's lives and how they navigate society. While opinions differ regarding how best to educate children about gender and sexual attraction, as the first and primary educators of their children, parents and guardians must be included in assessing when and how best to broach these sensitive topics.

Unfortunately, some Wisconsin school districts have failed to make parents and guardians aware of when their children have received instruction or have been surveyed about gender, sexuality, or even personal sexual experiences. This undermines parental authority and responsibility. No educational policy should substitute the authority of a teacher, school board, school staff, or contracted entity for that of parents, especially when it comes to matters that have a far-reaching impact on the emotional, physical, and moral well-being of their children. Public laws and educational policies must be designed to support and affirm the essential role of parents in their child's ongoing education and development.

In the interests of transparency and cooperation, AB 562 makes certain that parents and guardians are aware of when their child will be participating in programs related to sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or gender expression. Parents and guardians must also be instructed on how they may inspect all materials, curricula, and other program components.

If a family does not desire a student's participation in these activities, AB 562 ensures that the student's parent or guardian may opt, through written request, to forgo participating in them. This notification and ability to opt out is essential for families that choose to emphasize what Pope Francis described as "the beautiful differences and complementary relationship between man and woman."

The best education teaches children to develop their unique character and potential, to grow in their capacity for love and responsibility. We applaud Assembly Bill 562 for fostering transparency and inclusivity among parents, educators, students, and staff, and for ensuring that



parents are recognized as primary and essential participants in a child's education and development.

For all these reasons, I urge you to support Assembly Bill 562.

Thank you.

[Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]

Schools are places where students learn accurate information about different families and members of their community, and how to be respectful of each other, even if they don't agree with one another.

This is an attempt by anti-LGBTQ+ organizers and elected officials to allow families to veto what gets taught in schools by playing on tired stereotypes that assume talking about sexual orientation, gender, and gender identity means you are talking about sex.

We already have too many problems, we don't need to make it more difficult for these students:

- LGB youth seriously contemplate suicide at almost three times the rate of heterosexual youth.²
- In a national study, 40% of transgender adults reported having made a suicide attempt. 92% of these individuals reported having attempted suicide before the age of 25.³
- **LGB youth who come from highly rejecting families are 8.4 times as likely to have attempted suicide as LGB peers who reported no or low levels of family rejection.**⁴

- **SOURCES:**

[1] CDC, NCIPC. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [online]. (2010) {2013 Aug. 1}. Available from:www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars.

[2] CDC. (2016). Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Risk Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9-12: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

[3] James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey. Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality.

[4] Family Acceptance Project™. (2009). Family rejection as a predictor of negative health outcomes in white and Latino lesbian, gay, and bisexual young adults. *Pediatrics*. 123(1), 346-52.:

Please vote against this bill!

Sandy Brown
811 N. 5th Ave.
Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235

Good Morning!

Summary: Please oppose and/or delay AB 562, which is an attempt to rob students from positive engagement with age-appropriate identity-building education. It will not keep students safe; it will cultivate stigma at best and provoke fights between LGBTQ+ youth and their parents at worst.

Dear Education Committee Chair Rep. Thiesfeldt,

I'm reaching out as a resident of Madison opposed to AB 562, which is scheduled for hearing this morning at 10a. Since it was introduced yesterday afternoon, I've just found out about it and would like to share an important reframing for you.

The LGBTQ+ community is interpreting this proposal as an LGBTQ+ parental "opt out" bill which would require "each school board of a school district ...before providing any program related to sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or gender expression to a pupil in the school district ... to give notice of the program to the pupil's parents or guardians." Now, I understand where this request is coming from. In middle school, I had parents who opted me out of public sex ed, and who preferred to cover topics like that privately in our Catholic home. However, topics regarding gender are NOT to be equated with sexual health topics. Gender is a subject of Identity, rather than a subject of sexual health, and can safely be introduced in age-appropriate manners just the same as other Identity topics such as interests, beliefs, appearance, and culture. Further, there are numerous levels of age-appropriate education on gender which can be introduced as early as kindergarten, when children begin asking questions about what "girl" and "boy" things are, and by when they may already be invited to family events such as "gender-reveal" parties.

AB 562 will not have the intended effects. This is being introduced by well-meaning parents who want to keep kids safe. However, this proposal is not putting the safety of children first. They aren't thinking about the negative impacts this will have on households with trans children, or the households with anti-LGBTQ sentiments in the home.

Here's what will happen:

- 1) Provoke conflict in the home regarding gender identity. Many LGBTQ+ youth come from homes that are against or uneducated about LGBTQ+ identity, where the parent is likely to use this "opt out". If a child is asking questions and would like to learn about gender, especially LGBTQ+ youth, and their home is not a safe place to discuss these topics due to anti-LGBTQ+ sentiments, that child will be robbed of positive and age-appropriate education about their own self-identity.
- 2) Further stigmatization of gender and differing gender identities. When we treat a topic as inappropriate, we make it "taboo" for kids and they cultivate negative associations with the topic, rather than a healthy age-appropriate relationship with the topic. Gender should be treated as a topic of identity, just the same as schools handle beliefs, appearance, ethnic identity, national identity, culture, and personal history.

Please oppose AB 562 on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community. We stand for cultivating happy, healthy, self-realized authentic community, and that starts with protecting LGBTQ+ youth who will benefit from education on gender identity and expression.

Thank you for reading, and please contact me with any follow up questions. I will be keeping tabs on the results today.

Sincerely,

Deanna Havey (she/hers)
978-290-7342
1305 N Wingra Dr
Madison, WI

Good morning, I would like to express my opposition to the bill AB 562

I am the Chair and founder of a group that represents the health and well being of our LGBTQ community in Door County. This bill is designed to inhibit a healthy educational platform on issues our children deal with every day. Ignoring the reality of sexual orientation and gender will not make it go away. Not to mention that suicide among queer youth is a reality. Children who do not have family support, might be further at risk with the introduction of this bill. We owe it to our children to educate them with openness and compassion.

The words in bill AB 562 would allow families to veto what gets taught in schools. When children learn about sexual orientation, gender, gender identity in the safety of a learning environment they become more tolerant and included.

Please submit my written testimony into the meeting records.

Thank you,

Cathy Grier
Sturgeon Bay
Open Door Pride Chair and Founder

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Cathy Grier
she/her
Open Door Pride Chair and founding member

Open Door Pride's mission: To affirm Door County diversity through inclusion for All

Our 5th annual Pride Saturday June 26, 2021 Virtual 11-1 pm with a live Ceremony in Martin Park at noon

Open Door Pride PO Box 792 Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235

Greetings members of the Education Committee of the Wisconsin State Assembly:
I have just learned about AB 562 and did my best to review the bill's language in the limited time I have before you consider it in committee.

While I do not have the time to elaborate due to my desire to send this to you ahead of your 10am meeting, I ask that you please understand that my opposition to this bill is rooted in epistemically sound, scientifically valid evidence, as well as my mandate as a social worker (see NASW Code of Ethics and WI DPI School Social Work Practice Guide).

I am the advisor for our school district's Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA) - they will craft a letter that they will send to you later this afternoon - a letter that will include much more detail; we apologize that a letter could not be sent to you ahead of this morning's committee meeting.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you, and have a wonderful day,

Joshua Morey
MS, MSW, CAPSW
School Social Worker
Rice Lake Area School District
715-234-2181 ext. 5262
moreyj@ricelake.k12.wi.us
he/him/his

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