

Legislators of Iowa,

This commentary is in consideration of the proposed HF9 bill, whose purpose as I understand it is to mandate the reporting of openly LGBT youth to parents, as well as to prohibit the use of gender affirming pronouns in schools.

The state of Iowa has lately favored actions which restrict and limit the freedoms and securities of its present and future LGBT youth. One such action was to prohibit transgendered girls from participating in sports with their aligned gender. This was in reflexive response to the national debate sparked by Lia Thomas, a case which brought to light myriad moral and ethical questions related to transgender rights. I refrained from commentary in that debate predominantly because it pitted the rights of female athletes against the rights of transgender females in such a complex manner as to render any such opinion meaningless.

The wake of this legislature [HF2416], despite the intricacy of the ethical dilemma it quelled, is simple, and it set a precedent. While the situation surrounding HF2416 was extraordinary and will likely continue to be hotly debated, its unprecedented implication is that the fundamental rights of transgendered, bisexual, gay, lesbian, and queer youth are neither guaranteed nor intrinsically protected. It is for that reason that any bill suggesting the promulgation of sanctions affecting the safety and security of LGBT (or for that matter, any) youth should be subject to the greatest scrutiny.

HF9 is such a bill.

In addressing HF9's first intent which involves supplying mandatory notice to the parents of LGBT youth, several issues erupt. From first foundations, mandatory reporting is an action performed by responsible persons to the state, reserved for emergent conditions such as abuse or neglect, which constitute persistent or immediate danger to students, dependent adults, or other vulnerable persons. In other words, teachers have a professional obligation to defend their students' safety and wellbeing.

Depending on a student's individual background, coming out as homosexual, transgendered, or queer can be met with a diverse range of reactions. While some families are very accepting of the knowledge that their children might be gay, others are not so forgiving. Putting teachers in a position where they are forced, perhaps against their moral judgement, to disclose a child's declared sexuality or gender identity to their parents has the probability of precipitating serious physical or mental harm to that child. It also serves no educational purpose, is erosive to the bond of trust formed between student and teacher, and it flies in flagrant opposition to a teacher's role as a positive, protective mentor.

The bill's second intent is to disallow the use of gender affirming pronouns in schools. Among professionals (including bankers, physicians, salespeople, and anyone who works with people), it is well understood that clients will leave and never come back if you defame their name, their title, or their person. We are born with a name, which sometimes changes, and that name reflects our fundamental identity. It is at the core of our being, and it is something we cannot escape. Regardless of age we carry the burden and blessing of our names. Honoring someone's preferred name, and by extension their pronoun(s), is a matter of respect.

HF9 implicitly suggests redacting teachers' right and impetus to respect and protect their students.

On the basis of its discriminatory and destructive principles, I suggest the immediate rejection of proposed bill HF9 by the state of Iowa.

R.S.