

**From:** Acton, Ida D  
**Sent:** Mon, 7 Jun 2021 19:41:43 +0000  
**To:** T9PublicHearing  
**Subject:** Written Comment: Title IX Public Hearing (protecting Queer/Trans Youth)

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To whom it may concern within the U.S. Department of Education,

As more and more youth are discovering and embracing their developing genders and sexualities in our complex world, protections are even more important than ever before. I feel that the breadth of Title IX, which has always protected Queer and Trans youth as a bit of an afterthought... needs to take a very particular, broader embrace. As so many states seek to narrow the rights of Trans-identified folks specifically over the past few years: laws around medical care for minors, sports participation restrictions/bans, public bathroom restrictions are those that come quickly to mind, it becomes more and more important for the protections of gender and sexual minority youth to be one of the most important functions of Title IX and for Federal Law to hold states accountable for divisive, homophobic and transphobic legal efforts.

I am an out, gender-variant, queer school administrator, and as such, I hold an elder-type space (although I am only 46) in my community for queer and trans students and staff and for queer folks beyond the school system who need to see reflections of someone like them in a public-facing leadership role. As a queer kid growing up in U.S. public schools (In Ohio, New Jersey and Maryland) in the 80s and 90s, I knew I was unsafe. I knew that there was no space for me to be my full self within that container. The only images of queer community I was afforded by the media I had access to were of those dying of AIDS. The world has expanded and there is so much more access to an understanding that sexuality and gender exist on a spectrum, not in a static binary. These kids won't stay in the closet to stay safe, because they believe that they can make a better world and that they deserve that world. This is beautiful! This is social evolution! And it must be protected. They need to be protected. And I need to be protected, as do my queer and trans teachers, secretaries, counselors, paraeducators, cafeteria workers, custodians and coaches. We need to build a world where our queer and trans students grow up with as much safety as we can afford them and then become the adults that they were meant to be, and maybe some of them can be those school administrators and staff for the next generation. It's still rough out there. Even on the West Coast. Even in big, "liberal" school districts. Every year I intervene and protect queer and trans students through every avenue I have available. During my career thus far, I have seen extensive harassment, bullying and assault as a school employee in four different districts in California and Washington. I have conducted numerous HIB investigations, passed many difficult disciplinary decisions, provided counseling to countless families struggling to support and keep their queer and trans children safe. When a trans or queer identity is joined with other significant marginalization, such as race or disability the vulnerability is even greater. Queer and trans students deserve all the protection you can provide them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ida D. Acton

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“The practice of love offers no place of safety. We risk loss, hurt, pain. We risk being acted upon by forces outside our control.” -bell hooks