

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 242 Session of 2015

INTRODUCED BY SIMS, COHEN, KINSEY, KIM, HENNESSEY, SCHWEYER, DONATUCCI, BROWNLEE, V. BROWN, FARINA, SCHREIBER, THOMAS, McCARTER, McNEILL, FRANKEL, O'BRIEN, ROSS, BOYLE, WHEELAND, CALTAGIRONE, C. PARKER, YOUNGBLOOD, WATSON, SCHLOSSBERG AND GINGRICH, APRIL 14, 2015

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON RULES, APRIL 14, 2015

A RESOLUTION

1 Supporting the goals and ideals of the "National Day of Silence"  
 2 to bring attention to anti-lesbian, gay, bisexual and  
 3 transgender name-calling, bullying and harassment faced by  
 4 individuals in schools.

5 WHEREAS, The "National Day of Silence" is a day on which  
 6 students take a vow of silence to bring attention to the anti-  
 7 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender name-calling, bullying  
 8 and harassment faced by individuals in schools; and

9 WHEREAS, The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network  
 10 designates the third Friday of every April as the "National Day  
 11 of Silence"; and

12 WHEREAS, Hundreds of thousands of students at more than 8,000  
 13 schools have participated in the "National Day of Silence" in  
 14 past years; and

15 WHEREAS, The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network's  
 16 2013 National School Climate Survey illustrates the pervasive  
 17 harassment and victimization faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and

1 transgender students by documenting their experiences within the  
2 preceding academic year; and

3 WHEREAS, Nearly 75% of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender  
4 students reported being verbally harassed by their peers at  
5 school because of their sexual orientation, and more than 55%  
6 because of their gender expression; and

7 WHEREAS, Thirty-six percent of lesbian, gay, bisexual and  
8 transgender students reported being physically harassed by their  
9 peers at school because of their sexual orientation, and over  
10 20% because of their gender expression; and

11 WHEREAS, Over 15% of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender  
12 students reported being physically assaulted by their peers at  
13 school because of their sexual orientation, and more than 10%  
14 because of their gender expression; and

15 WHEREAS, Nearly 60% of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender  
16 students reported that they felt unsafe in school, and nearly  
17 30% reported missing at least one entire school day in the  
18 preceding month because of safety concerns; and

19 WHEREAS, Transgender students were more likely than all other  
20 students to report feeling unsafe at school because of their  
21 gender expression; and

22 WHEREAS, According to the National Transgender Discrimination  
23 Survey, those who expressed a transgender identity or gender  
24 nonconformity while in grades K through 12 reported alarming  
25 rates of harassment, physical assault and sexual violence so  
26 severe that almost 15% of those surveyed had to leave school;  
27 and

28 WHEREAS, Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students who  
29 experienced high levels of verbal harassment because of their  
30 sexual orientation or gender expression report a grade point

1 average nearly a half grade lower than those of lesbian, gay,  
2 bisexual and transgender students who experienced low levels of  
3 such harassment; and

4 WHEREAS, The presence of supportive staff contributed to a  
5 range of positive indicators including fewer reports of missing  
6 school, fewer reports of feeling unsafe, greater academic  
7 achievement, higher educational aspirations and a greater sense  
8 of school belonging; and

9 WHEREAS, A growing number of cities and local education  
10 authorities in the Commonwealth are adopting laws and policies  
11 to prohibit name-calling, bullying, harassment and  
12 discrimination against students on the basis of their sexual  
13 orientation and gender identity or expression; and

14 WHEREAS, Every child should be guaranteed an education free  
15 from name-calling, bullying, harassment and discrimination  
16 regardless of his or her sexual orientation and gender identity  
17 or expression; therefore be it

18 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives support the goals  
19 and ideals of the "National Day of Silence" and call on the  
20 people of Pennsylvania to observe the "National Day of Silence"  
21 with appropriate ceremonies, programs and activities; and be it  
22 further

23 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives encourage city  
24 and local educational authorities in the Commonwealth to adopt  
25 policies to prohibit name-calling, bullying, harassment and  
26 discrimination against students, teachers and other school staff  
27 regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity or  
28 expression, so that our schools are institutions where all  
29 individuals are able to focus on learning.