

Senate Education Committee

March 20, 2023

RE: Proponent Written Testimony for SB 255

Madam Chairwoman Baumgardner and Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for hearing about this important issue of safety for our public school students. We support SB 255 and urge your support. Our school districts need legislation to guide their student safety policies.

The coordination of overnight travel for co-ed school trips has always been a complicated issue. Safety concerns for students and the stress and responsibility of staff and parent volunteers being just two of the many issues that require time and consideration.

It is tremendously more complicated today with gender identify concerns, FERPA restrictions, strong opinions on both sides of the trans gender issue, stress and anxiety of students and additional stress and situations for teachers, coordinators, and parent volunteers to navigate.

That said, the important underlying factor from which all decisions should be made to advocate for the rights and emotional security of ALL of our students, not just those who gender identify differently.

We cannot give into fear and make decisions only for our students whose gender identity and expression is different than their birth sex. The rights and emotions of all students must be considered for all school policies, especially regarding overnight trips and room assignments. A healthy and safe environment should be of the upmost priority for ALL students.

Supporting SB 255 is a necessary move in the right direction for the safety and emotional wellbeing of ALL students. We implore you to favorably pass this bill out of committee.

Sincerely,

Aaron and Jennifer Ferguson

Senate District #9