

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 361

WHEREAS, students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, or asexual or who otherwise are not heterosexual or cisgender ("LGBTQIA+") face unique challenges at school, including bullying, discrimination, and lack of access to supportive resources; and

WHEREAS, LGBTQIA+ students face harassment and bullying in schools due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression; and

WHEREAS, national data show that LGBTQIA+ students are suspended nationwide at a higher rate than their non-LGBTQIA+ peers; and

WHEREAS, these challenges have a profound impact on LGBTQIA+ students' mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being; and

WHEREAS, the challenges LGBTQIA+ students face in schools can make them feel invisible and marginalized; and

WHEREAS, compared to their non-LGBTQIA+ peers, LGBTQIA+ students in New Jersey are at a higher risk for mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation; and

WHEREAS, LGBTQIA+ youth in New Jersey exhibit higher rates of suicide-related thoughts and behaviors compared to their non-LGBTQIA+ peers; and

WHEREAS, like all students, LGBTQIA+ students have the right to a safe, supportive learning environment, where they feel valued and respected, that is free from discrimination and harassment, and that provides equal access to educational opportunities, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, New Jersey became one of the first States to require that students learn about the political, economic, and social contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender figures, as well as people with disabilities, in middle and high school; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to foster greater inclusivity within schools for LGBTQIA+ students; and

WHEREAS, the State's efforts to promote inclusive and supportive public-school environments for LGBTQIA+ students would be strengthened through regular dialogue with advocates for the LGBTQIA+ community and others with relevant expertise;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, PHILIP D. MURPHY, Governor of the State of New Jersey, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and by the Statutes of this State, do hereby ORDER and DIRECT:

1. There is hereby established an Advisory Commission on Advancing LGBTQIA+ Youth Equity and Inclusion in Schools ("Commission").

2. The Commission shall consist of no less than 20 and no more than 25 members, including the Commissioner of the Department of Education, the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services, and the Attorney General, or their designees.

3. All members and designees shall serve at the pleasure of the appointing agency, or in the case of those appointed by the Governor, at the pleasure of the Governor, and all shall serve without compensation.

4. The Governor shall select a Chairperson from among the members of the Commission, who shall also serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

5. The purpose of the Commission shall be to support the Department of Education's efforts to advance LGBTQIA+ equity in schools by: (a) reviewing state and local educational policies and practices that impact LGBTQIA+ students; (b) identifying best practices for creating inclusive and supportive school environments

for LGBTQIA+ students; (c) recommending strategies for addressing and preventing bullying, harassment, and discrimination against LGBTQIA+ students; (d) recommending ways to support districts in implementing statutory and regulatory requirements to include instruction on the political, economic, and social contributions of LGBTQIA+ figures in an appropriate place in the curriculum of middle and high school; (e) recommending ways to support the mental health and well-being of LGBTQIA+ students; (f) advising on professional development and training best practices for educators and school administrators regarding LGBTQIA+ issues; and (g) upon request by the Commissioner of the Department of Education, advising the Commissioner regarding other issues relating to fostering safe and supportive school climates for LGBTQIA+ students.

6. The Commission shall organize as soon as practicable after the appointment of its members and shall convene as soon and as often as requested by the Governor or Chairperson.

7. The Commission is authorized to call upon any department, office, division, or agency of this State to supply it with data or other information or assistance available to such agency as the Commission deems necessary to discharge its duties under this Order. Each Executive Branch department and agency is hereby required, to the extent not inconsistent with law, to cooperate fully with the Commission and to furnish the Commission with such assistance on as timely a basis as is necessary to accomplish the purposes of this Order. To the extent necessary, the Department of Education shall provide professional and clerical staff to the Commission, which may include an employee of the Department of Education who is designated to serve as the Executive Director of the Commission.

8. The Commission may consult with students, parents, education professionals, and other knowledgeable individuals with respect to any aspect of its mission.

9. The Commission shall be purely advisory in nature and shall provide advice to the Governor and other Executive Branch departments and agencies as appropriate.

10. For purposes of this Order, "Executive Branch departments and agencies" shall mean any of the principal departments in the Executive Branch of State government and any agency, authority, board, bureau, commission, division, institution, office, or other instrumentality within or created by any such department, and any independent State authority, commission, instrumentality, or agency over which the Governor exercises executive authority, as determined by the Attorney General.

11. Nothing in this Order shall be construed to supersede any federal, State, or local law.

12. This Order shall take effect immediately.

GIVEN, under my hand and seal this
17th day of June,
Two Thousand and Twenty-Four,
and of the Independence of the
United States, the Two Hundred
and Forty-Eighth.

[seal]

/s/ Philip D. Murphy

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Parimal Garg

Chief Counsel to the Governor