



FAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 9, 2021

Mayor Linda Gorton
Lexington Urban County Council
200 E. Main St.
Lexington, KY 40507

Dear Mayor Gorton and Urban County Council,

In the Fayette County Public Schools, we are committed to educating the whole child, which means embracing every student who enters our schools and prioritizing not only their academic success, but also their social-emotional and mental health and well-being. Toward that end, our district has hired additional mental health professionals, implemented a districtwide social-emotional learning curriculum for students in preschool through high school, partnered with community mental health agencies to expand care, and developed a robust suicide prevention education program. In particular, the Department of Student Support strives to meet the needs of students and families daily, placing an emphasis on building trusting relationships with students, and implementing a system of monitoring online activity for warning signs so that we can quickly identify students who need additional support.

This letter serves as our expression of support in the LGBTQ Youth Mental Health Protection Ordinance banning the widely discredited practice of conversion therapy, which is also opposed by the nation's leading medical organizations, including the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the nation's leading educational advocacy organizations including the American Association of School Administrators, American Federation of Teachers, American School Counselor Association, American School Health Association, National Association of School Psychologists, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Education Association, and School Social Work Association of America.

Evidence against this practice is staggering, but we are particularly concerned by the findings of The Trevor Project that 42% of conversion therapy survivors have attempted or seriously considered suicide in the past year. Our continued efforts to prevent youth suicide and teach students coping skills is of the highest priority for the Fayette County Public Schools and it is without hesitation that we stand alongside our LGBTQ-identified youth and their allies to speak out against conversion therapy. Thank you for considering this important matter and we look forward to continuing to serve our youth together.

Sincerely,

FCPS Department of Student Support
c/o Doug Adams, Director
450 Park Place
Lexington, KY 40511

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education: Tyler Murphy, Chair • Amy Green, Vice Chair • Tom Jones • Christy Morris • Stephanie Spires

Acting Superintendent Marlene Helm

450 Park Place, Lexington, Kentucky 40511 • Phone: 859.381.4100 • www.fcps.net

February 4, 2021

Mayor Linda Gorton
Lexington Urban County Council
200 E. Main St.
Lexington, KY 40507



Dear Mayor Gorton and Urban County Council,

On behalf of Fayette County Public School's LGBTQ Advisory Committee, I am writing to express our full support for the LGBTQ Youth Mental Health Protection ordinance and subsequent ban on the harmful practice of "conversion therapy" on LGBTQ-identified youth. It is the Advisory Committee's mission to provide all FCPS schools and administrations with information, resources, and education necessary to promote, safe, supportive, and affirming environments for every K-12 student, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. Created in 2015, the FCPS LGBTQ Advisory Committee convenes monthly to discuss and assist with all LGBTQ-related needs and concerns throughout the district.

The FCPS LGBTQ Advisory Committee, along with the Kentucky Mental Health Coalition, the Kentucky Psychological Association, the National Association of Social Workers – Kentucky Chapter, and every other major medical and psychological association in the United States, believe that it is imperative to ban conversion therapy for LGBTQ+ youth. Conversion therapy is an ineffective pseudoscience that has disastrous mental health outcomes for those who are forced to endure it. It fuels a false narrative that sexual orientation and gender identity can and should be changed. Of people who have experienced conversion therapy, 42% of survivors have attempted or seriously considered suicide in the past year (The Trevor Project) and are 5.9 times more likely to report high levels of depression (San Francisco State University). While many LGBTQ+ issues are considered partisan issues, banning conversion therapy is a mental health issue. More than 20 states and the District of Columbia have already banned conversion therapy for minors (Human Rights Campaign), as have more than 70 local governments across the country (The Trevor Project), including Louisville, KY (September 17, 2020, 24-1 vote) and Covington, KY (March 24, 2020, 5-0 vote).

We urge you, Mayor Gorton and Council, to join the growing number of supporters who recognize the need to protect LGBTQ+ youth by enacting a ban on conversion therapy and supporting the LGBTQ Youth Mental Health Protection ordinance. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Julia Bennington, MSW, LCSW

FCPS LGBTQ Advisory Committee, Chair
GLSEN Bluegrass, Board Member
LHS GSA Faculty Advisor
FCPS School Social Worker, Lafayette High School
401 Reed Lane
Lexington, KY 40503
julia.bennington@fayette.kyschools.us