

Dear Chairman Brenner,

I am a school counselor that has worked with youth in schools for the last 14 years, and was a pediatric nurse before that. I am writing to very strongly ask you to dismiss HB 8. I have worked extensively with LGBTQ youth in schools and the community, as well as their families, and the requirement for school personnel to have to notify parents of any discussion involving their child and LGBTQ and/or sexuality concerns puts youth at serious risk. In almost all cases, of the hundreds and hundreds I've dealt with, a trusted teacher and/or counselor at school is the first person that youth disclose to and discuss concerns. Of course I work with them towards communicating to their parents (and in almost all cases we are able to eventually get to that point); however the vast majority of youth are terrified for this to happen. While a parent may eventually love and accept their child simply because they are their child, the youth can only go by general comments of opinion or beliefs that have been stated in the home in discerning whether they feel safe to discuss with their parents. Unfortunately, it has been my experience that it is the rare youth that feels comfortable first going to their parents. Forcing and mandating this would significantly increase the suicide risk in a population for which suicide is already the primary cause of death. For students not considering suicide, running away is the second option; and obviously poses great risk to the child in many ways.

With formidable concern for our children, and with my years of expertise, I urge you to err on the side of our youth's care and safety by dismissing this bill.

Thank you in advance,

Karan Hammond, MS Ed

Licensed School Counselor

Karan Hammond Dunn

(She/her)

"Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about.

Be kind. Always." --Robin Williams