

**The Problem**

Students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) are subject to pervasive discrimination, including harassment, bullying, intimidation and violence, and have been deprived of equal educational opportunities, in schools in every part of our nation. Numerous social science studies demonstrate that discrimination at school has contributed to high rates of absenteeism, dropout, adverse health consequences and academic under achievement among LGBT youth. When left unchecked, such discrimination can lead, and has led to, life-threatening violence and suicide.

Federal statutory protections expressly address discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex and disability. Unfortunately, federal civil rights laws do not expressly protect students from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. As a result, students and parents have limited legal recourse to redress for this type of discrimination.

The Solution

The Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA) prohibits any school program or activity receiving federal financial assistance from discriminating against any public school student on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition, the SNDA prevents discrimination against any public school student because of the actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity of a person with whom a student associates or has associated. The Act allows an aggrieved individual to assert a violation of these prohibitions in a judicial proceeding. The SNDA is modeled after Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. §§ 1681-1688), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and provides legal recourse to redress such discrimination.

Catholic Support

- Catholics accept people as they are. 69% of U.S. Catholics believe that homosexuality cannot be changed. Public Religion Research Institute, 2011.
- 73% of U.S. Catholics favor laws to protect gays and lesbians in the workplace. Public Religion Research Institute, 2011.

Catholic Talking Points

- Catholic social teaching regarding the dignity of each person instills respect for all people.
- Catholics are called to defend the marginalized and oppressed of society.
- SNDA includes broad religious exemptions and does not apply to our church, nor any of our privately funded church organizations and programs.

Catholic Social Teaching and Scripture

- Homosexual persons "must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided." – Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2358.
- "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." – Luke 10:27 (New American Bible)

Catholic Constituent Faces of SNDA: Available upon request