



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, August 13, 2019

Contact: Blair Harvey, blair.harvey@phimc.org, 312-629-2988 x111

LGBTQ Inclusive Curriculum Bill Approved by Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker

Bill will include LGBTQ historical contributions in public school curriculum.

Students in Illinois public schools will learn about the contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) people in state and national history after approval of the Inclusive Curriculum Law by Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker, who signed the bill into law on Friday.

Starting with the 2020-21 school year, the Inclusive Curriculum Law—formerly known as House Bill 246—will ensure the inclusion of the contributions of LGBTQ people in the history curriculum taught in Illinois public schools. Illinois is the fifth state to enact such legislation, after California in 2011 and New Jersey, Colorado, and Oregon in 2019.

Sponsored by State Rep. Anna Moeller (D-Elgin) and State Sen. Heather Steans (D-Chicago), the Inclusive Curriculum Law is an initiative of Illinois Safe Schools Alliance (the Alliance), a program of Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago (PHIMC), along with Equality Illinois and the Legacy Project, with support from more than 40 education, healthcare, and civil rights organizations across the state.

“We applaud the Alliance, Equality Illinois, and the Legacy Project for their tireless advocacy on behalf of the LGBTQ community, particularly youth, and express our deep gratitude to Gov. Pritzker and our allies in the legislature who brought this law to fruition,” said Karen A. Reitan, Executive Director of PHIMC. “Teaching LGBTQ history will give all Illinois students a more nuanced, dynamic understanding of history and will be especially significant to LGBTQ young people, whose identities will be affirmed and reflected in their curricula.”

“This legislation exemplifies a demonstrated commitment to build and nurture an inclusive and supportive environment in the educational system in Illinois,” said Mary F. Morten, Board Chair of the Alliance. “Gaining a greater knowledge and understanding of the contributions of various underrepresented communities benefits all of us. As we move toward what true diversity, equity, and inclusion mean in our school communities, this is a critical and vital step in the right direction.”

“We are excited to pass and enact the Inclusive Curriculum Law in 2019—the 50th anniversary year of the Stonewall Riots and the birth of the modern LGBTQ equality movement,” said Brian C. Johnson, CEO of Equality Illinois. “An inclusive history will affirm for LGBTQ students that people just like them existed and made significant contributions to society.”

The Illinois School Code presently ensures inclusion in history curricula of the contributions and experiences of other historically marginalized communities, including people of color, women, immigrant communities, and people with disabilities.

An inclusive curriculum can have positive, affirming benefits and help counteract some disturbing trends. Sadly, in schools across Illinois and the United States, LGBTQ students are told, through bullying, harassment, and exclusion, that they do not belong. These conditions have created school environments where LGBTQ students are forced to hide their identities simply to protect themselves.

According to GLSEN'S 2017 School Climate Survey, 88% of LGBTQ students in Illinois have heard the word "gay" as a slur. Only 24% of LGBTQ students in Illinois were taught anything positive about LGBTQ people in classrooms.

"Illinois is on the right side of history with this important, life-saving law," said Victor Salvo, Executive Director of the Legacy Project. "To deny a child information that could give them hope, that could help them feel less alone, that could help them feel like they mattered—while at the same time condemning them to hearing bigoted slurs in the hallways of their schools—is a cruelty that every feeling adult has a responsibility to stop."

This law plays an important role in improving school climates for youth and adults alike. The more the contributions of LGBTQ Illinoisans and Americans are recognized, the safer LGBTQ students can feel in school and the more they succeed across fields and disciplines. The Alliance—which offers [professional development](#) for school personnel, social service providers, and government officials—looks forward to working with and supporting schools and school staff as they integrate LGBTQ history into their curricula.

"PHIMC is incredibly proud of the Alliance and its partners for spearheading the campaign for this vital legislation," stated Karen A. Reitan. "PHIMC is committed to reducing health inequities caused by systemic oppression and discrimination. The connection between supportive school environments and health is indisputable, especially for marginalized youth. This new law and the change it will create are critical."