

Public Comments by Jordan Costen
October 12, 2017 School Board Meeting

Good evening. I am the Executive Director and Founder of Safe Space NOVA. We are a nonprofit based in the Northern Virginia area. Our goal each year is to provide positive programming for LGBT youth. Did you know that the rate of suicide attempts is 4 times greater for LGBT youth and 2 times greater for questioning youth than that of straight youth? How about that LGBT students are nearly 2 times more likely to be bullied at school or online? Or that 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBT. 68% of those kids were kicked out of their families and homes because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. These rates are too high. We need to lower them. How do we start you may ask? Start with Safe Space NOVA. We are here to let the youth in this city know that there is a place where they will be safe, accepted and supported by peers and adults alike. Throw in a little fun and a few laughs and I think we have a winning combination.

Our organization's goal has always been to be a resource to the community. As I look at today's political and social climate, I find there are triggers which could lead a teenager to self-harm. As a survivor of suicide, I find it my mission to make sure no child follows in my footsteps.

I stand before you as I have with other school boards in the region to say Safe Space NOVA is here and we are ready to provide the support needed to ensure LGBT youth do not suffer in silence.

I thank you for your time and look forward to working with you in the future.