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Topic * VADOE 2022 Model Policies

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What is your relationship to ACPS? * Parent/Guardian of an ACPS Student

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As parents we want to protect our children from as much harm as we possibly can. We do things for them that we wouldn't imagine doing for ourselves because we love them more than life itself. This is why I vehemently oppose this bill.

When my child came out to me and my husband we affirmed our love and support for them. I only so wish that they had the same reaction from their so called friends. Instead they were ostracized and outed to their entire school. The bullying and rejection has led to severe anxiety and depression which years of therapy and hospitalization is only part of their road to recovery. We talk about how important it is for parents to be loving and supportive, but it is just as essential for LGBTQ children to also be in a safe school environment. In a 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health by the Trevor Project 45% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered suicide in the past year including more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth. 73% of LGBTQ youth reported experiencing symptoms of anxiety including more than three-quarters of transgender and nonbinary youth. When my child was admitted to the mental health care facility it broke my heart to hear it was the first time they felt they were among peers who understood them because most of the people admitted are gay. I want that to sink into the Virginia Department of Education that my child's first safe queer space with kids her age was at a mental facility.

These past few years have been amazingly challenging for adults. How much more for our transgender and nonbinary children? These kids already have so many things stacked against them and this bill is

only going to heighten the wall that ignorance and discrimination has built. Outing these kids before they are ready; restricting their ability to use the restroom; excluding them from participating in sports; and not using their affirming names or pronouns denies these children of their autonomy and dignity. If we as adults cannot teach our children to become independent and compassionate individuals who respect and give back to their community then we have failed as parents and as people.