

FAQ for the SAFETY ACT

The *Support Academic Futures & Educators for Today's Youth Act (SAFETY Act)* strengthens already existing California protections against forced outings of LGBTQ+ students in schools.

Why is the SAFETY Act important now?

The SAFETY Act is crucial to protect LGBTQ+ students amid challenges to their rights. Anti-LGBTQ+ groups have protested against LGBTQ+ history and Pride flags in schools. In 2023, California Attorney General Rob Bonta sued the Chino Valley Unified School District over its “forced outing” policy, which was temporarily blocked by a judge. Additionally, the Orange County Board of Education is joining a lawsuit to overturn the SAFETY Act.

How is the SAFETY Act Helpful?

“Forced Outing” policies harm students’ well-being. A University of Connecticut study found that 1/3 of outed LGBTQ+ minors are more likely to experience depression. The SAFETY Act protects students’ right to come out on their own time and protects teachers from retaliation for not outing students.

<https://www.ctinsider.com/news/article/ct-lgbtq-outed-youth-mental-health-uconn-study-19398381.php>

The well-being of students is the center-point of the SAFETY Act.

Unfortunately, sometimes LGBTQ+ students are not welcome or safe to be their authentic selves at home. A study has shown that 44% of LGBTQ+ youth say they have not reported harassment to an adult at school out of fear their parents would learn their identity. And an article from Parents.com states that outing violates a person’s privacy and increases their risk of physical harm, homelessness, substance misuse, and suicide.” In these instances, it is important that students know they can confidently and safely seek out resources at school or support from a trusted teacher without fear that their parents or guardians will find out when they are not ready.

How does the SAFETY Act improve the relationship between students and their parents/guardians?

The SAFETY Act affirms that coming out is a personal decision, free from external pressures. It prevents local authorities and school boards from interfering in family matters.

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Has the SAFETY Act changed anything significant to existing law?

Yes, by protecting educators and faculty from potential retaliation from school boards and other faculty. It codifies current law, affirming students' constitutional right to privacy and preventing local governments from imposing policies that interfere in family matters.

Why the SAFETY Act and why now?

In 2024, over 200 anti-LGBTQ+ bills were introduced nationwide a fanning a new wave of anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment. California's SAFETY Act provides a sense of protection to students and school personnel from the negative impacts.

Why is this important for our AAPI communities?

In many of our AAPI communities, we are concerned about being different and therefore many choose to assimilate. Many AAPI parents of LGBTQ+ youth share the concern that being "out" will bring their children harm. This could be in the form of verbal, physical harassment, and being socially ostracized. These fears are valid, though they should not be a reason to discourage a child or student from coming out and being their full authentic self. Instead of being overprotective of our AAPI LGBTQ+ youth and suppressing their identities, let's be courageous, open minded, and supportive.

One very important and final reminder regarding the SAFETY Act is that we must support and empower students regarding their identities and lives. We must allow LGBTQ+ youth to be the authors of their own stories.

