

Statement of Support for Transgender & Nonbinary Youth

Provided by the UU FaithAction NJ Reproductive Justice Task Force

With thanks to Rev. Rosemarie Newberry and [Garden State Equality](#).

Good Evening:

My name is _____.

I live at _____. I have been a resident for _____ years.

As a person of faith and member of the _____, I am here to voice my support for Policy 5756, which outlines standards for the care and protection of trans and nonbinary students in NJ public schools.

Issued in 2019, this policy was adopted by over 500 school districts in NJ. Contrary to some of the current rhetoric surrounding this policy, there have been **no** reported negative effects from this policy since it was issued. In fact, this policy provides teachers and other school personnel with the guidelines they need to support students while dealing with very nuanced situations. There is nothing in Policy 5756 that prohibits schools from notifying a parent **if the student has given permission**.

However, informing parents against the student's wishes could bring them great harm. An August 2023 national survey shows that more than half of all transgender youth have seriously considered attempting suicide in the last year. NJ state data shows that 40 percent of transgender youth are not supported by their families, and 1 in 10 transgender children are met with physical violence from their parents.

We **all** want parents to be involved in decisions involving their children. However we also know that LGBTQ+ youth face extremely high risks of family rejection and abandonment. Policy 5756 allows our trained school professionals the ability to support all of our students, even those who may have unsupportive families. The support of just one caring adult, a parent or a teacher, can make a world of difference for a young person.

As for gender identity and sexual orientation, the research and science is clear.

1. A young person navigates questions of gender identity and sexual orientation before or during puberty. Middle school kids are all trying to figure out who they are, who they may be attracted to, and what it all means. Sometimes the discovery is quick and self-evident, but sometimes it's confusing and takes time.
2. Supportive parents with strong bonds of trust with their children are crucial sources of understanding and guidance. But not all children are blessed with a supportive, nurturing home environment. Sometimes, for any number of reasons, parents are disparaging, openly hostile, or dangerous to the child. School staff can't possibly know in advance which families are supportive.
3. Transgender and queer children in particular need a tremendous amount of emotional support. From parents, ideally. From teachers, if necessary. Children without support are far more likely to show poor mental health, self-injury, and develop suicidal ideation.

In my faith tradition we believe in the inherent worth and dignity of **all persons, all bodies, and all genders**. I stand in solidarity with people of diverse backgrounds, faiths, and affiliations, who all agree that we need to ensure our children's safety, emotional and physical wellbeing. It is our responsibility as people of faith to raise our voices in support of safety, justice, and equity for trans and nonbinary people everywhere.

Make no mistake, repealing Policy 5756 negatively impacts our transgender youth.

Our transgender and nonbinary adults and youth are continually under attack by legislatures, school boards, and the media across the country. Eliminating Policy 5756 will remove a crucial safety net from trans students.

Please support all of our children's rights and safety by continuing to support Policy 5756.