

## **Mobilizing UU's to respond to attacks on protections for Transgender students in NJ public schools**

Here is our specific Ask: to follow what is happening in your local school board. Be on the lookout for attacks on policy 5756, and/or the introduction of any 'parental rights' policies. If these issues arise, please make every effort to attend the local school board meeting. And if you feel comfortable, use the testimony script in the toolkit provided to speak out. Your mere presence is impactful, so please make every effort to attend and mobilize your UU community and other allies to show up as well.

Nationally the targeted attacks on transgender people have been getting coverage in the news. However, you may not be aware of the coordinated efforts taking place here, in NJ, to overturn policy 5756 that protects the privacy of transgender students in our public schools— some of which were successful.

Whether under the guise of 'parental rights' or online misinformation campaigns to elicit fear among communities, this is gaining traction locally.

### **Here's some background...**

Policy 5756 arose out of guidance originating during former Gov. Chris Christie's second term, in which he signed a law directing the Commission of Education to provide school districts with "guidelines concerning transgender students" in 2017. Soon after in 2018, during Gov. Murphy's administration, the New Jersey Department of Education released its [Transgender Student Guidance for School Districts](#), which reiterated the statutory and constitutional protections afforded to transgender students. This led to the adoption of Policy 5756 by a majority of the nearly 600 school districts throughout the state to help navigate their responsibilities under the law. (source: ACLU NJ)

You can find the relevant details outlined clearly in the Guidance document linked above within the sections titled *Student-centered approach*, and *Safe and Supportive Environment*. Policy 5756 includes the recommendation to keep private the student's assertion of the gender identity that they know themselves to be if the student conveys that they cannot share this information at home.

Right wing groups and individuals have targeted protections such as policy 5756 as being harmful to the entire student population. Additionally, the narrative of ‘parental rights’ in local political races has been weaponized as a smokescreen to attack this policy.

Unfortunately, taking away these protections only necessitates the likeliness of bullying and violence against increasingly vulnerable students—whether at home or at school.

The Trevor Project tracks recent statistics among the LGBTQ+ community and mental health that is enlightening and can find it here.

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2023/>

A 2024 Rutgers-Eagleton Poll showed that the majority of NJ residents believed teachers shouldn’t share a student’s transgender identity with their parents if the student doesn’t feel safe coming out.

<https://eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Rutgers-Eagleton-Poll-Trans-Issues-03.18.24-FINAL-PUBLIC-PDF.pdf>

### **Update in the Courts...**

[The February court decision](#) came after State Attorney General Matthew Platkin sued five school districts in [Morris](#) and [Monmouth](#) counties in 2023 for dropping or amending their transgender student policies. The state appeals court’s decision allowed the school districts involved in the court case to consider alternative transgender policies while the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights reviews the case.

Shortly after the decision, the Middletown Township school board, one of the districts challenging Policy 5756 in court, dropped its policy requiring staff to keep students’ gender identities private. Edison District has dropped the policy also. (source: NJ.com linked articles)

Just recently in November 2025, the latest school district activity was in Colts Neck (Monmouth County), where the local BOE adopted a “Parental Bill of Rights” policy that authorizes parents to inquire about and receive information when their children change their pronouns or gender identity at school.

## **Let's Mobilize!**

Being Unitarian Universalists means saying words and doing actions that exemplify who we are and compel us to act and stand up for those being oppressed. The following are core tenets of the UU belief system and give us the credibility and strength to participate in social justice actions.

*Inclusion Statement:* Every part of you is sacred, including your gender and sexuality. As UUs, we not only welcome LGBTQ+ people, we celebrate the full diversity of gender and sexuality as a spiritual gift. We build inclusive communities and work for justice and equity as a core part of who we are. All of who you are belongs. All of who you are is welcome.

*Education:* Our Whole Lives (OWL) : A sexuality education program for the entire lifespan, inclusive of sexuality and gender diversity.

*Coalition:* Effective justice ministry depends on partnership. UU partners for LGBTQ justice work, beyond the Unitarian Universalist Association, include UU State Action Networks, Side with Love, and Transgender Religious Professional UUs Together (TRUUsT). (From [UUA.org](http://UUA.org))