

Greater Boston PFLAG supports anyone who wants to create a more just and affirming world for the LGBTQIA+ people they love, and we invite you to join us in the work to realize this vision. We will not be silent and let misinformation and hatred make inroads into communities - we will advocate and teach others how to do the same. Capacity building is how we stay strong - working together and making local impacts that ripple out into the world.

Are you confused about new laws and policies targeting LGBTQIA+ youth? Are you hearing worrisome information about book bans, athletics, and health care? You are not alone. Disinformation is rampant and intended to cause chaos and uncertainty, but we can protect all kids and our communities by getting the facts and organizing locally.

This toolkit will enable you to make an impact in your community.

Community Organizing, Step-By-Step







- ♥ Understand your town's school administration and governance, and how residents can interact with school and town officials
- ♥ Find like-minded individuals to share the work
- ♥ Get to know the messages people are hearing and what they are concerned about
- ♥ Create clear, easily-understood messages that address people's concerns
- ♥ Support those who are promoting inclusivity in your community

Get to know your local government

- ♥ Look at your town's website to find out how decisions are made, money is allocated, and by-laws are enacted.
- ♥ Official town websites will have .gov as the last part of their web address, such as [yourtown.gov](#) or [yourtown-ma.gov](#)
- ♥ Get familiar with the boards, commissions, and council, and the individuals who serve
- ♥ Explore the MA open meeting law guide for information on what boards and commissions need to do in order to be deemed accessible and transparent
- ♥ Ask a neighbor or friend about their experiences with local government

Find Like-Minded Individuals to Work With

Organizing in your community can be daunting, especially if you think you'll have to go it alone. Finding others with the same goals for protecting all youth can alleviate some of these concerns, but where to find them? Some suggestions are:

-  Do an internet search for "Your Town + DEI" or look for a Greater Boston PFLAG group, Facebook group, Rainbow Coalition, or Human Rights Commission associated with your town.
-  Join the PTA/PTO for your school and attend School Committee, Select Board, or Parent-Teacher meetings and listen for people expressing gratitude for inclusive curriculum or DEI efforts.
-  Ask friends or neighbors.
-  Get in touch with school staff who support the school's Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) or Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SAGA) and ask if they know of any organized groups or parents who are in favor of diversity, equity and inclusion in schools.
-  Look for faith-based organizations with similar values and goals.
-  Look up campaign materials or voting records for anyone who has run for Town Meeting/Town Council or other elected positions.

Respond to People's Concerns

As you hear more from community members, you will become familiar with the language they use to describe their concerns. Some media outlets deliberately use frightening phrases that are not widely understood (such as Critical Race Theory, which has never been taught at the K-12 level but has become a political issue).

Using simple, easy-to-understand language will allow people to retain and use the knowledge to speak with others. Rather than getting bogged down with medical terms regarding gender-affirming care, for example, speak about the importance of all youth receiving comprehensive medical care, including mental health care.

It also helps reinforce that you are calm and polite if you can explain things matter-of-factly.

It's tempting to react with anger when listening to misinformation that reveals bigotry, but it rarely ends well. Rather than getting angry, mention how nice it is that the other person cares so deeply about X or that they looked for more information on the topic but, unfortunately, had fallen prey to misinformation and guide them towards accurate, primary sources.

Keep Your Words Simple & Factual

When talking about school curriculum and censorship:

- All children have the right to an honest and accurate education that prepares them for the future.
- Educators have the tough job of preparing children for the future and helping them build the critical thinking skills they need to succeed.
- Curriculum should be set by educators, not censored by partisan politicians with political agendas.

When talking about school climate and culture:

- Every parent hopes our laws will ensure our children's safety, protection, and freedom. Some of these laws would target LGBTQ kids for bullying and mistreatment just because of who they are.
- Our schools should protect all students—including LGBTQ students—so that they can learn and thrive in a safe environment. Trying to erase LGBTQ students, families, and history by banning any discussion about them in schools sends a message that LGBTQ kids, and kids with same-sex parents, are not welcome in classrooms

When talking about hostile bathroom policies:

- All of us, including transgender people, are concerned about safety in restrooms. Transgender people are part of our communities, and they need to be able to use the restroom just like everyone else, with the same protections for their safety and dignity and human rights.

Preparing Public Comments

Speaking during public comment at the school committee, Select Board, or other town meeting allows you to praise existing DEIJ efforts and voice support for new ones.. Familiarize yourself with the process ahead of time, as in some places you need to sign up in advance and/or limit your comments to 3 minutes.

- Stick to one major topic per public comment, rather than split your time between several points
- Write your statement ahead of time, so that you can practice and time how long you take
- Thank all board members for their time and their commitment to your town
- Ground any claims you make or statistics you give in facts and data and reiterate a shared goal of schools and communities where **everyone** can thrive

Create a Positive Buzz

Sometimes the opposition paints pro-DEI work as divisive. Being visible in your community is a positive force, making the world more inclusive for everyone. Here are some ideas:

- Host a read-in or another literacy event in partnership with your town library.
- Participate in a neighborhood clean-up or playground spruce-up day (if one doesn't exist, organize it!)
- Write letters to the editor of your town paper to express gratitude for those who are doing DEI work, citing specific examples and how the community benefits.