



LOCAL IMPACT MATTERS

Greater Boston PFLAG 2022

ADDRESSING PROBLEMS

Legislators across the country are banning teachers from educating students on LGBTQ+ issues, banning transgender girls from playing sports, criminalizing affirmative care to transgender youth, limiting parenting rights, removing healthcare protections, and reversing overall discrimination protections. Individuals are harassing librarians and pushing for hundreds of books to be banned in communities everywhere. Proud Boys were arrested after threatening a Pride event in Idaho and another white nationalist group, the Patriot Front, made an appearance at a protest in Boston this summer. Boston Children's Hospital is being targeted by anti-trans activists who picketed the hospital entrance carrying signs and yelling hateful messages as families arrived for medical appointments with their children; this occurred after weeks of harassment and threats of violence aimed at doctors and hospital staff and even included a bomb scare resulting in a lockdown of the hospital.

It is easy to feel complacent and immune from hate in Massachusetts, because we're not facing the same legal challenges as folks in other states are. But even here, LGBTQ+ young people continue to face isolation, discrimination, and violence. The latest Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey demonstrated that LGBT youth are at higher risk for almost every type of bullying, harassment, health risks, and economic instability.

MASSACHUSETTS LGBTQ+ YOUTH ARE:

2.1x

**more likely to
experience bullying**

3.3x

**more likely to
consider suicide**

2.9x

**more likely to
endure homelessness**

"Everyone's experience is different, and to be able to support others, it helps to understand what they may experience."

-Training Participant



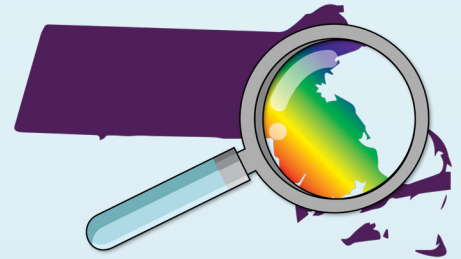
HEALTHCARE AND LGBTQ+ YOUTH

Bills banning gender-affirming care on transgender youth have been introduced nationwide. In addition, health outcomes for LGBTQ+ youth nationwide are poorer than those for their non-LGBTQ+ peers.

Spotlight on Massachusetts

Fortunately, Massachusetts is not one of the states considering criminalization for providing care to transgender youth, and a number of doctors and specialist clinics in the state work to help; in fact, some of the national leaders in trans-affirming care for minors are based here in Boston. Currently, those leaders and institutions are under attack from right-wing zealots who seek to instill fear and hope their threats will change how doctors treat transgender patients.

Despite our progressive leaders in health, LGBTQ+ youth, and transgender youth in particular, are still experiencing health disparities in Massachusetts. Many of these inequities follow the national trend; for example, LGBTQ+ youth in Massachusetts, like their peers nationwide, are more likely to consider or attempt suicide and more likely to experience sexual violence than non-LGBTQ+ individuals. Notably, as is the case nationwide, these risks are not experienced equally among all. Black and Latinx LGBTQ+ youth are at particularly high risk for many of these outcomes at disproportional rates compared to their cisgender heterosexual peers.



GBPFLAG Response: Local Impact Matters

Trans Youth and Family Day

Two panels of doctors from top medical institutions in the Boston area provided information for parents and others about the range of healthcare options available for transgender youth, including information on mental health, ideas on how to recognize and support the youth in crisis, and medical assistance for people, such as puberty blockers and hormones.

Trans Day of Visibility

Organized in partnership with the Commonwealth's Commission on LGBT Youth, this event was held on the Massachusetts State House steps. Over 150 attendees and several legislators both attended and spoke at the event, including Senate President Karen Spilka and House Speaker Pro Tem Kate Hogan.

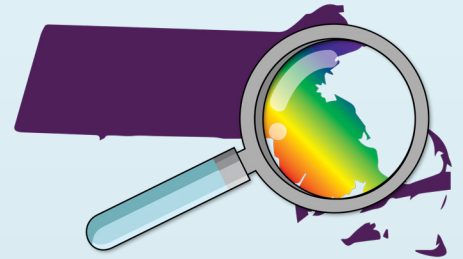
SCHOOLS AND LGBTQ+ YOUTH

Nationwide, schools are often unsafe for LGBTQ+ youth, who are more likely to be bullied, threatened with a weapon, get into fights, and be injured at school than their non-LGBTQ+ peers. To make matters worse, a variety of states are considering or have passed bills with negative consequences for LGBTQ+ students. Many states have banned transgender kids from playing on gender-segregated teams in accordance with their gender identity, which represents part of a larger movement restricting transfeminine folks from womens' sports.

Spotlight on Massachusetts

Massachusetts isn't considering legislation to restrict LGBTQ+ youth in schools at the moment, but this group still faces challenges that their cisgender, heterosexual peers don't. Just like national trends, Massachusetts LGBTQ+ students are more likely to experience bullying at school, and more likely to get into fights, to such an extent that they are three times more likely to skip school because they don't feel safe or supported.

In fact, Massachusetts laws lead us to believe our youth are safer from hate and bullying than we necessarily see on the community level. For example, the law protects students from anti-LGBTQ+ bullying, but only one in four Massachusetts public-school handbooks have explicit anti-bullying or anti-discrimination policies protecting LGBTQ+ students. The law protects students from anti-LGBTQ+ bullying, but only one in four Massachusetts public-school handbooks have explicit anti-bullying or anti-discrimination policies protecting LGBTQ+ students.



GBPFLAG Response: Local Impact Matters

Greater Boston PFLAG's Safe Schools program directly addresses the challenges LGBTQ+ youth face by educating staff and students at area schools. Research demonstrates that the staff educational program has made schools a safer place for LGBTQ+ students by improving teachers' attitudes towards these students and increasing their comfort in intervening in anti-LGBTQ+ behaviors.



GBPFLAG's post-workshop evaluations show that teachers who have attended our programs learn specific steps they can take to improve the climate in their schools. For example, these teachers are better prepared to:

- Push for gender-neutral bathrooms
- Look for LGBTQ+ books for the classroom library
- Add rainbow flags or stickers to classroom
- Make sure to use the correct pronouns for students

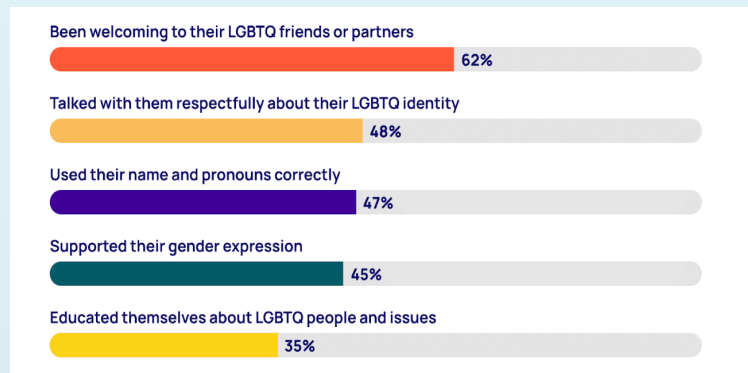
"I loved trainings. Having a gay daughter and a cousin who is transgender...this is a huge help to me as I look to support them both." - Training Participant

COMMUNITIES AND LGBTQ+ YOUTH

Beyond the school and healthcare systems, LGBTQ+ youth face a variety of challenges from simply existing as members of their communities around the country. Various states and local municipalities have restricted access to LGBTQ+ affirming books not only in schools, but in public libraries and even some bookstores. LGBTQ+ youth are also more likely to experience homelessness or involvement with the foster care system than their non-LGBTQ+ peers, because they are at risk of being kicked out of their homes by parents who reject them.

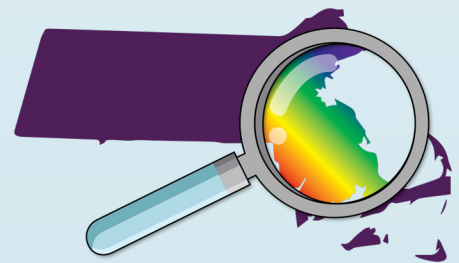
Five Most Common Ways that LGBTQ Youth Reported Feeling Supported by Their Parents or Caregivers.

*2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health,
The Trevor Project*



Spotlight on Massachusetts

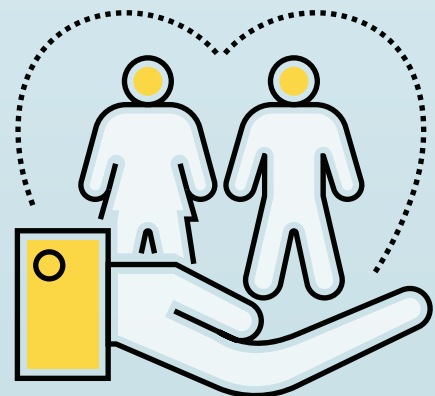
In Massachusetts, we fortunately are not seeing a concerted effort to ban LGBTQ+ books, but the community still presents challenges for LGBTQ+ youth. Notably, Massachusetts LGBTQ+ youth are overrepresented in our foster care system. Even worse, a recent report from the State Commission on LGBTQ Youth shows that the system is not adequately supporting the LGBTQ+ youth in its care.



GBPFLAG Response: Local Impact Matters

At GBPFLAG,

- We have 18 support groups across Eastern Massachusetts, helping parents, caregivers, and community members better support their LGBTQ+ family members, friends, and community members.
- GBPFLAG is partnering with the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families to improve the support available for LGBTQ+ kids in the foster care system, providing trainings and resource guides to social workers and foster parents.
- GBPFLAG is a member organization with dedicated seats on the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ youth to help advise others in state government on effective policies, programs, and resources.



WHEN KIDS ARE SUPPORTED, WE SEE THEM

THRIVE!



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

A DAY TO BE SEEN — Cas Martin wore a blue, pink, and white transgender pride flag as he listened to a speaker outside the State House marking Transgender Day of Visibility. Lawmakers told the crowd they would work on legislation supporting trans people. **B1.**



Thank you for being a part of the GBPFLAG community!

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