



## **Support for SR45 - Model Statewide School Policy on Suicide Prevention**

Good afternoon, Chairperson Kidani and members of the committee. My name is Keygan Miller, and I am the Senior Advocacy Associate for The Trevor Project. Previously, I served as a high school special education teacher, and currently I lead The Trevor Project's efforts on school suicide prevention.

I appreciate the opportunity to express The Trevor Project's strong support of HR45, which would request the Department of Education to create a model statewide school policy on student suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention in grades K-12 and further addresses the needs of students placed at high risk.

The Trevor Project is the world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning) young people. We work every day to save young lives by providing support through free and confidential suicide prevention through our 24/7 phone lifeline, chat, and text. We also run TrevorSpace, the world's largest safe space social networking site for LGBTQ youth, and operate innovative education, research, and advocacy programs.

Current data shows that young people in Hawaii are hurting. The Trevor Project's 2020 National Survey of LGBTQ Youth Mental Health showed that 40% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous twelve months, with more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth having seriously considered it. Further, a recent report from Mental Health America showed that 45 percent of 14-18 year-olds are not hopeful about the future, with over half of LGBTQ teens being not hopeful about the future. This lack of hope can lead to increased thoughts of suicide and other mental health challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the need for mental health and suicide prevention, especially as social isolation has increased due to physical distancing and other preventative measures. In a Spring 2020 survey conducted by the CDC, over a quarter of those ages 18-24 reported having seriously considered suicide in the past 30 days, compared to slightly over one-tenth reporting seriously considering suicide in the past year in a 2019 survey. Recent polling by the Trevor Project also shows that 35% of LGBTQ youth report feeling more lonely during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to 22% of their cisgender/straight peers. A higher baseline of vulnerability means that when a stressor occurs (such as COVID) those who are already at higher risk are more likely to be in crisis. Therefore, it is more important than ever for schools to be prepared to work with young people who are experiencing crisis or suicidality.

From my time in the classroom, I can tell you that when a young person is in crisis, it is essential for the adults around them to be equipped to see the issue and respond appropriately, and for



the young person to be able to access resources that provide them the care they need to feel supported and safe. The onus of this responsibility should not be placed on any individual adult in the moment, but rather should be a collective and pre-planned effort by the community to help protect our youth. School aged youth typically spend at least a third of their day in schools, giving teachers, administrators, and other school staff the unique ability to provide a supportive environment. Development of suicide awareness, prevention, and postvention policies that are readily accessible to school officials will help prepare them to react quickly, appropriately, and with care when a student is at risk or in a crisis.

The Trevor Project, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the American School Counselors Association have created a model school policy for suicide prevention that can be utilized as a resource and we would be happy to assist the Department of education in their efforts to provide this type of life saving resource to educators across Hawaii.

For these reasons and on behalf of the youth who depend upon our services, The Trevor Project strongly supports SR 45. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Thank you,

Keygan Miller  
(They/Them)  
Senior Advocacy Associate  
The Trevor Project

**SR-45**

Submitted on: 3/14/2021 7:26:59 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/17/2021 3:20:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Thaddeus Pham	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and EDU Committee Members,

As a public health professional and concerned citizen, I urge you to support SR45.

The Hawai'i Department of Health's Sexual and Gender Minority Reports showed that our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender youth experience higher rates of suicidality than their peers. Please pass SR45 to ensure a comprehensive statewide policy of suicide prevention and postvention that is LGBTQ inclusive.

Mahalo,

Thaddeus Pham (he/him)

**SR-45**

Submitted on: 3/15/2021 7:27:07 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/17/2021 3:20:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
John Bickel	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a teacher for over thirty years, I have known too many students who attempted or seriously thought about committing suicide and one who succeeded. Anything we can do to curb this should be done.

**SR-45**

Submitted on: 3/15/2021 8:19:11 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/17/2021 3:20:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Tami Whitney	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and Honorable Members,

Hawai'i Department of Health's Sexual and Gender Minority [Reports](#) showed that our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender youth experience higher rates of suicidality than their peers. Please pass SR45 to ensure a comprehensive statewide policy of suicide prevention and postvention that is LGBTQ inclusive.

Thank you,

Tami Whitney

**SR-45**

Submitted on: 3/16/2021 9:10:21 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/17/2021 3:20:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Sarah Michal Hamid	Individual	Support	No

**Comments:**

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and Honorable Members,

Hawai'i Department of Health's Sexual and Gender Minority [Reports](#) showed that our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender youth experience higher rates of suicidality than their peers. Please pass SR45 to ensure a comprehensive statewide policy of suicide prevention and postvention that is LGBTQ inclusive.

Mahalo

**SR-45**

Submitted on: 3/15/2021 9:38:47 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/17/2021 3:20:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Anika Martin	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

A state-wide model focusing on school policy on student suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention is **essential** to establishing a safer school environment for students of grades K-12, especially those of gender minority groups. The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) noted that schools across the nation are considered unsafe environments for LGBTQIA+ students. In fact, according to a study conducted by Russel and Fish (2016), LGBTQIA+ students experience lower grade-point averages, lack motivation to attend classes, demonstrate poor social skills, engage in substance abuse, and are more likely to commit suicide and/or self-harm. Furthermore, nearly one in every three LGBTQIA+ students skip class or an entire school day due to feeling unsafe. By implementing suicide prevention efforts, students, especially those of gender minority groups, can be provided with a safe and supportive environment - which is essential for students to feel accepted, and a critical factor to decreasing detrimental social, mental, and physical effects.

**SR-45**

Submitted on: 3/15/2021 9:38:25 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/17/2021 3:20:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Cate Waidyatileka	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

This measure is hugely important in preventing suicides in the vulnerable youth population. Each suicide reverberates, devastating a large number of family, friends, and acquaintances. We must focus energy on PREVENTION. Thank you. Cate