



February 16, 2007

Dear Member of Congress:

GLSEN – the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network – urges you to support current efforts to pass the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Act (LLEHC) of 2007 and to sign on as an original co-sponsor to the LLEHC. The bill, which will be introduced by Reps. John Conyers and Mark Kirk in the coming weeks, would substantially broaden federal hate crime law. It would expand current hate crime coverage beyond race, religion and national origin, to include sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and disability.

GLSEN is particularly hopeful that this legislation will pass because we know that students are not immune from these kind of hateful attacks. A recent study conducted by Harris Interactive on behalf of GLSEN entitled “From Teasing to Torment” documented that three percent of all students nationwide have experienced physical assault because of their gender, another three percent of all students experienced physical assault because of their gender expression, another three percent of all students experienced physical assault because of their sexual orientation, and still another three percent experienced physical assault because of their disability. Among self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students, eight percent reported being physically assaulted because of their gender expression and another eight percent reported physical assault because of their sexual orientation.

Since 1968, the federal government has had very limited jurisdiction to prosecute cases when state and local law enforcement officials cannot or will not. The LLEHCA will not only strengthen the current legislation by broadening the types of violent crime that it covers, it will expand the protected categories to include hate crimes based on sexual orientation,, gender identity, and disability.

GLSEN believes that Congress must do everything it can to empower the federal government to assist in local hate crime prosecutions and to protect all Americans from violent crimes based on hate and bigotry. Should you wish additional information about GLSEN’s position on hate crimes, please contact Neil Bomberg, Public Policy Director at 202 347 7780 ext. 203 or at nbomberg@glsen.org. To have your name included as an original co-sponsor when LLEHCPA is introduced in the coming weeks, please contact Keenan Keller with Mr. Conyers’ office (225-2825) or Richard Goldberg with Mr. Kirk’s office (225-4835).

Sincerely yours,

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