



February 16, 2023

Dear Legislator,

The Kentucky Coalition for Healthy Children, led by its Steering Committee of 37 organizations and over 140 members, is writing to express our concerns with respect to certain bills filed in the 2023 KY General Assembly which can result in reducing the protection of the health and well-being of children and youth in the Commonwealth.

The bills we are referring to, SB 150, HB30, HB120, and HB 177, address issues of health in schools and include provisions which are contrary to what have been deemed evidence-based health and mental health practices. These bills contain stipulations which will impact comprehensive sex education in schools, and adolescent's consent and privacy which can lead to a reduction in the prevention and treatment of things such as substance abuse, mental health issues, sexually transmitted diseases, contraceptive management, or reproductive health. What is more, some of these bills, if passed, would substantially withdraw protection for LGBTQ+ students and could lead to bullying by other students, teachers, and school staff based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

LGBTQ+ youth in Kentucky already suffer much higher rates of bullying and other forms of violence which severely impact their health and well-being. We have prepared the attached brief with the most recent statistics on just how many challenges these young Kentuckians are already facing and how an alarming number of them are experiencing hopelessness, serious mental health problems and even suicide attempts.

The medical and health associations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), and their Kentucky chapters, are unanimously in favor of providing the necessary supports to LGBTQ+ youth to be protected from policies and practices that can undermine their health and well-being.

ALL children and youth in Kentucky have a right to healthy, safe environments. Schools, where they spend a significant portion of their time, constitute a key place to holistically promote and improve the mental and physical health of students so they can develop their full potential. We urge the KY General Assembly to reject policies that would undermine the health and well-being of our students, especially when we know from the numbers we present to you just how much many students are suffering. We stand ready to help in any discussion of legislation to strengthen and protect children and youth health and mental health, especially in the school setting.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue and of the information in our brief.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Chandler".

Ben Chandler
Chair, Kentucky Coalition for Healthy Children
President and CEO, Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky