



City of Gainesville, Florida
Office of Mayor Harvey L. Ward, Jr.

Proclamation

WHEREAS, young people, teachers, school staff, families, and communities must be free from the violence of racism, transphobia, homophobia, sexism, ableism, and all forms of systemic oppression; and

WHEREAS, K-12 schools must be safe learning environments that include and affirm LGBTQI+ youth, especially those who are transgender, non-binary, intersex, black, indigenous, people of color, people with disabilities, and from all communities that experience marginalization; and

WHEREAS, advocates have designated 2023-2024 as a time for communities to unify in support of the LGBTQI+ youth in schools; and

WHEREAS, LGBTQI+ youth frequently experience bias-based bullying, harassment, discrimination, and punitive discipline that increases their likelihood of entering the school-to-prison pipeline; and

WHEREAS, over 90% of LGBTQI+ students have reported hearing anti-LGBTQI+ remarks from classmates; and

WHEREAS, LGBTQI+ youth are more likely than their non-LGBTQI+ peers to experience mental health concerns, including stress, anxiety, and depression; and

WHEREAS, approximately half of the LGBTQI+ youth population seriously considered suicide in the last year, a trend that increases among indigenous, Black, and multiracial LGBTQI+ young people; and

WHEREAS, over 200 anti-LGBTQI+ education bills are introduced each year in state legislatures across the country, the majority of which specifically target transgender and non-binary youth; and

WHEREAS, 85% of transgender and non-binary youth say that recent proposals by state legislators to restrict the rights of transgender people have negatively impacted their mental health; and

WHEREAS, every young person deserves equal educational opportunity as well as freedom from the fear that their basic civil and educational rights will be taken away from them; and

WHEREAS, young people who develop in positive school climates, free of bullying, harassment, and discrimination, report greater physical and mental safety, greater mental well-being, and improved educational and life outcomes; and

WHEREAS, positive school transformation must recognize that safety is too a low bar and that all communities deserve to be acknowledged and affirmed in our schools; and

WHEREAS, we must all demand the best possible future for all students, including those who identify as LGBTQI+, without exception.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Harvey L. Ward, Jr., by the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Gainesville, do hereby proclaim as follows:

1. We will support the goals and ideals of the Rise Up Campaign in demanding the best possible future for all youth including those who identify as LGBTQI+; and 2. We will encourage each state, territory, and locality to support the Rise Up Campaign and adopt laws and policies that prohibit bias-based victimization, exclusion, and erasure.

in the City of Gainesville and invite all our neighbors to join me in this call to action to demand equal opportunities, basic civil rights protection, and freedom from erasure for all students.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the official seal of the City of Gainesville, Florida, this 21st day of April, A.D., 2023.

