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## **An open letter to the Miami-Dade County School Board regarding the introduction of an LGBTQ History Month in Miami Dade County Public Schools**

*The proposed LGBTQ History Month should not be passed by the MDCPS school board due to a lack of clarity surrounding the "policies and practices" it seeks to implement and its direct violation of MDCPS policies 2240 and 2260.*

Dear Miami-Dade School Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my input on the issue of introducing an LGBTQ history month to Miami-Dade County Public Schools as outlined in item H11<sup>1</sup>. I am releasing this statement on behalf of the Rainbow Redemption Project, of which I am the president and founder. As a faith-based organization, we are advocating for the needs of ex-LGBTQ individuals and those who we believe could be medically or emotionally harmed by biased LGBTQ curriculum in schools.

My name is Sophia Galvin. I am 22 years old and have been currently detransitioning for two years. Detransitioning is the process of medical retransitioning to one's original birth sex after a period of hormone therapy and/or surgical interventions. I was born and raised in Miami, and enrolled in the Miami Dade county public school system from pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. At the age of 14, in my freshman year of high school, a gender therapist was invited to give a presentation on gender and sexuality to the entire freshman student body. We were instructed that both gender and sexuality were on a spectrum, and we were at liberty to self-identify all based on our own unique feelings. After being indoctrinated with this illusive set of beliefs, I began to "identify" as gay and struggled inwardly with gender dysphoria in the years to come.

It was at 17 years old that I made the decision to transition and become a man. I felt the only way to be "true to myself," and receive the healing I ultimately craved, to chemically reconstruct my very being. I made this decision out of anguish and desperation, not knowing how else to satisfy my ever changing self-perceptions. I may have looked bold, confident, and proud of my decision on the outside. Internally, however, I was broken and mortified by the thought of the medicalized pathway in store for my future. My newly found transgender identity was immediately affirmed by my peers and school staff, despite a documented history of severe mental illness and a previously feminine presentation.

In my senior year, I was president of the school's LGBTQ club, called "Spectrum." As president, I vigorously pushed what I believed were "life-saving" LGBTQ-affirming activities and curriculum. In fact, the very first action of the club that year was the institution of a school-wide celebration of LGBTQ history month. We decorated the school thoroughly; featuring posters in every hall and a detailed LGBTQ history timeline on one of the main floors. Also, during transgender awareness week, we held presentations in every 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade homeroom in the school on the importance of affirming trans-identified individuals. Eventually, our club's sponsor advised us to tone down our presence due to discomfort expressed from students and parents. My immediate response was that their opinions were simply homophobic, transphobic, and rooted in a desire to harm the student LGBTQ population. All I wanted was to foster a school environment where everyone felt comfortable "being themselves", and not suffering in silence as I had for many years. I know that this is the intention of many members of the LGBTQ community seeking

representation within schools. However, looking back, I can no longer say I agree with my actions for a multitude of reasons.

In the midst of my emotional turmoil, I still managed to graduate high school with a 3.7 unweighted GPA, a 1360 SAT score, and just shy of 50 college credits. I was also a Florida Bright-Futures Academic Scholarship Recipient and received additional scholarship funding from Florida International University, which I attended my freshman year. It was upon entering college, at 18 years old, that I began taking testosterone. I became even more mentally and emotionally unstable and started making reckless decisions. I ended up dropping out of college my second semester, due to being sexually assaulted, and receiving anonymous death threats. I then began to experience a severe drug and sex addiction. Ultimately, at 19, I made the decision to remove my breasts. I was led to believe by the LGBTQ community and healthcare professionals that this could be the thing that finally made me whole. However, it did not. After receiving the double mastectomy, I looked in the mirror and thought to myself, "this did not help me."

At 20 years old, I decided to stop testosterone. It was only then that I gained the maturity to consider the possible physical and psychological effects of these treatments. It took a few months for me to process all the trauma I had experienced and fully accept the reality that these treatments were not life-saving. Instead, the effects nearly killed me and the brighter future I once had. I received very little support in the detransitioning process. I also experienced a multitude of medical issues that no doctor was able to explain. If I was suffering before, my life now was unbearable. All I wanted was to move on. Yet every time I looked in the mirror or heard the sound of my own voice, I was reminded of the terrible mistakes I made. No amount of therapy was able to heal my deep-seated wounds. In a state of utter desperation, I prayed and asked God to help me. I didn't even know who God truly was, nor did I come from a Christian background. But still, from a young age I would pray and had an innate sense of His existence. Shortly after this experience, someone spoke to me about having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I began to understand the abundant love that he had for me. It has been through a deeply intimate relationship with God, and rooting my identity on the truth of His word, that I have been able to receive true healing and freedom.

In retrospect, I believe that the Miami-Dade County Public School system fostered a blindly LGBTQ-affirming environment within my high school. I was indoctrinated in this environment because I was never exposed to any opposing viewpoints and was taught to label those viewpoints as bigoted and evil.

If that presentation had included faith-based resources as an alternative means of dealing with gender dysphoria, I certainly would have had more options to consider than a path that led to medical intervention. If both sides of this gender ideology issue were explained to students, we would have had more information to make serious decisions about our lives and identities. However, I only ever heard one side and was only ever offered one solution: a solution which left me mutilated, broken, and hopeless. I believe I should have been encouraged to love myself as I was born, with the knowledge that I was fearfully and wonderfully made by a God who cares for me personally.

If informing students that God created us in His image, male and female, isn't permitted in school— why should these ideas be either? The statements that gender exists on a spectrum and that you can be any gender are *not* objective, academic statements. These are philosophical beliefs and opinions that vary across cultures and faiths. How can these ideas be presented to students in the absence of any other voice on the issue? Is that really inclusive?

Following my graduation in 2018, I was informed that there was a steep rise in the population of students at my previous school identifying as LGBTQ *after* my previous implementation of affirming activities through the “Spectrum” club. I believe the most logical explanation is that these young students are suffering from the same identity-based issues as I was and are taking refuge in the purpose and affirmation that the LGBTQ community could provide. I also believe that these young people can receive true healing and fulfillment through a foundational identity in Christ. However, addressing every aspect of this issue in an unbiased way is incredibly challenging, and would leave most students in a state of confusion. For this reason, I believe it is best to leave any conversations surrounding the LGBTQ community outside of the mandatory celebrations and curriculum of the school. Therefore, an LGBTQ history month should not be instated.

If the proposal put forward was simply to include *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) and *Bostock v. Clayton County* (2020) in the 12th Grade Social Studies curriculum, there would be no issue. As long as it is presented from an unbiased perspective (respectfully explaining the views of those who both agreed *and* disagreed,) it is reasonable to add these historical decisions to the curriculum. However, I take issue with Action #1 of the proposal, which states:

*“That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida: 1. Recognize and observe October 2022 as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) History Month and direct the Superintendent to support policies and practices, consistent with provisions outlined in Policy 2240 and Policy 2260, that respect and support LGBTQ students and their families throughout the school year.”*

The proposition does not include any description of what these “policies and practices” actually are. This lack of transparency about what the Superintendent may implement leaves students and families in the dark about what will happen on campus and in the classroom. In fact, in the absence of any concrete description, this action directly violates the principles of both Policy 2240 and 2260, which it claims to cite as evidence.

The introduction to item H11 begins with Baez-Geller’s reasoning for the LGBTQ history month, explaining that “...*LGBTQ individuals have made and continue to make lasting contributions to strengthen the fabric of American society.*”

Based on the language throughout this proposition, we have no reason to believe that students will be informed on any alternative viewpoints to the LGBTQ lifestyle. Additionally, not all students and families in the MDCPS may believe this statement is true, especially those like myself who have seen or personally experienced the harms of radical gender ideology. These issues are considered controversial, which means their instruction is subject to MDCPS Policy 2240: Controversial Issues and Student Expression.<sup>2</sup>

Policy 2240 stipulates that controversial issues are only permitted in instruction as long as it “*does not attempt to indoctrinate or persuade students to a particular point of view.*” Will educators be instructed by the Superintendent to give any mention of different viewpoints? Item H11 is silent on this issue.

Therefore, I am worried for the rights of both ex-LGBTQ students and students who may find other ways of processing same-sex attraction and gender dysphoria. I am concerned that those very students, and their peers who may agree with them, will not be able to express themselves. Policy 2240 requires measures to be taken so students may express controversial opinions “... *without subjecting them to academic consequences and disciplinary actions, ... in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice, ... [and] without jeopardizing their relationship with the teacher or the school.*”

Policy 2240 also dictates that, “*Controversial issues may be introduced in school-sponsored publications, productions, and performances **provided equal opportunity is given to present opposing viewpoints.***” Will assemblies, performances, and published material regarding LGBTQ history month also include this equal opportunity?

Finally, Ms. Baez-Gellar also references Policy 2260: Nondiscrimination and Access to Equal Educational Opportunity.<sup>3</sup> Policy 2260 requires the district “*review current and proposed courses of study and textbooks to detect any bias based upon sex, race, color, ... political beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, gender identification...*” Teaching LGBTQ history and social issues almost always necessitates the idea that same sex attraction and gender dysphoria are immutable, with no other means of action than what is provided by the LGBTQ community. This is inherently biased against the religious beliefs, political beliefs, sexual orientations, and gender identities of both ex-LGBTQ students and their peers who agree with them in the Miami Dade County Public Schools.

As outlined in Policies 2240 and 2260, no effort has been made to address the potential discrimination against students and families in the MDCPS who do not share the same opinions and identities. If Ms. Baez-Geller intends to provide equal opportunity for student expression, then this proposition must be rewritten to include strict criteria to guarantee that opportunity.

Though I was once an avid supporter of mandating LGBTQ awareness – against the wishes of other students, staff, and parents – I now firmly believe that such subject matter should not be addressed in schools. As a former LGBTQ Club president, my own goal for implementing the history month was to persuade my fellow students out of their own convictions. Even though my intention was to create an inclusive environment, I now realize I was doing the opposite. With the way this proposition is written now, we have no way to know that this ruling won’t do the same. I believe it will be an incredible detriment to the safety and scholarly spirit for students across Miami-Dade county.

It is virtually impossible to present the LGBTQ narrative from an unbiased perspective. Additionally, if Miami-Dade County Public Schools goes forward with this ruling, they would not be adopting an intersectional approach to this issue. They would be ignoring the realities of ex-LGBTQ individuals, many of whom have suffered complex mistreatment from both religious and medical institutions, as well as the LGBTQ communities they once were part of. But most importantly, I believe that passing an LGBTQ history month, with virtually no criteria on its implementation, would lead to the harm of vulnerable students searching for the fulfillment which can only be found in Jesus Christ.

As a former student in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, I thank you so much for the time and opportunity to consider my perspective on this issue.

Sincerely,  
Sophia Galvin  
Rainbow Redemption Project

#### References:

1. [Item H11](#) Office of School Board Members Board Meeting of September 7, 2022
2. Miami-Dade County Public Schools (2011). [Controversial Issues and Student Expression](#). (Policy Manual po2240)
3. Miami-Dade County Public Schools (2011). [Nondiscrimination and Access to Equal Academic Opportunity](#). (Policy Manual po2260)