



March 1, 2024

Chair Ginny Klevorn
581 State Office Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Klevorn and Members of the House State & Local Government Finance & Policy Committee:

OutFront Minnesota writes in support of HF 4273 (Finke) Rainbow flag bans prohibited. OutFront Minnesota, founded in 1987, is the state's largest LGBTQ+ advocacy organization that has sought to build power within Minnesota's LGBTQ+ communities and address inequities through intersectional organizing, advocacy, education, and direct support services. We believe that this legislation is important to inclusivity and recognition for the diversity of Minnesota and *all* of its residents.

Today, we offer our support for HF 4273 which would prohibit restrictions on the display of "rainbow banners, rainbow flags, rainbow posters, or any visual display" in public buildings. Unfortunately, around the country efforts to restrict the display of the rainbow flag or other related visual imagery have proliferated in state legislatures, and local and municipal policy conversations. Minnesota is not immune, and districts including Annendale, Farmington, Marshall, Worthington, and others have explored similar restrictions on the grounds of limiting political displays within classroom spaces.

Rainbow flags and other displays represent an important symbol of welcome at a time when LGBTQ+ individuals are the target of efforts to restrict our full participation in public life. Family and community support has a demonstrated beneficial effect¹ on the mental health of LGBTQ+ youth, and state Standards of Effective Practice (8710.2000)² charge teachers with creating "a welcoming and inclusive classroom community that reflects the diversity of student cultures in the design of the physical and virtual space, expectations, and organizational routines that represent the needs of all students...[and] support[ing] students using culturally responsive strategies."

While there are a range of personal and cultural beliefs around LGBTQ+ identities; the presence of rainbow flags, banners, or other symbols creates an important gesture of welcome without infringing on the beliefs or expressions of others within our state's communities. We believe that

¹<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2023/>

²<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/8710.2000/>



blanket restrictions on these displays - even when well-intentioned - do not serve to advance the public good. LGBTQ+ people are in every community and school throughout our state.

OutFront Minnesota seeks to support and empower *all* individuals in becoming their best and fullest selves; and we recognize the importance of visual symbols of inclusion in fostering communities that celebrate our state's rich diversity. The passage HF 4273 will advance those goals; and support the dignity of residents, families, and our communities. OutFront Minnesota respectfully urges your support for HF 4273.

Sincerely,

Karlton A. Laster
Director, Policy & Organizing