



## Equality for LGBT Youth

Every young person, gay or straight, deserves to feel safe in their own school and have access to the resources they need to flourish and grow.

For students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or questioning, school can be a difficult place to learn and mature. Harassment is commonplace, and many schools do not do enough to provide a supportive, safe environment for their LGBT students.

Coming out can be an incredibly difficult and stressful event in a young person's life. It can be a scary, confusing and isolating time, even for those who have a supportive family -- and many LGBT youth do not. Studies show that LGBT youth are at increased risk for suicide, homelessness, substance abuse and other risk behaviors.

MassEquality believes we need to make sure that every school is a safe school, and to do more to support LGBT youth during what can be a difficult time.

Working with [BAGLY \(Boston Alliance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth\)](#) and the [Massachusetts Commission on GLBT Youth](#), MassEquality supports these 2008 initiatives:

- **Increase funding for programs directed at GLBT youth, including the Massachusetts Commission on GLBT Youth and Safe Schools Programs.**

There are a variety of programs that provide support for LGBT youth:

The Massachusetts Commission on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth, which works to protect and support the health of LGBT youth in schools and communities of Massachusetts.

Safe Schools programs, which work with school administrators, faculty, parents and staff to make sure our schools are a safe and supportive environment for LGBT youth.

Suicide prevention programs and other community-based social support.

Substance abuse and HIV prevention programs for LGBT youth.

These important programs make a real difference in the lives of LGBT youth, but they all need increased funding to be able to adequately reach out to youth and provide them with the support they need.

- **Pass S.2461, which would require school districts to set an anti-bullying policy.**

This legislation would help make schools a safer place by requiring each school district to develop a bullying prevention plan. LGBT youth, who are often targets of bullying, would particularly benefit from this increased focus on the problem of bullying in our schools.

*Note: to view the online version of this document, please visit:*

<http://www.massequality.org/ourwork/equality/youth/>