

Milo Art

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COMM 104: Argumentation and Debate

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Resolution Debate for LGBT+ Youth

Introduction

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness... What is the Declaration of Independence without liberty?

What is America without the freedom to choose?

Resolution: Congress should amend Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to offer an LGBT+ grant.

As seen by L.A. Unified Board of Education, schools are starting to incorporate LGBT+ teachings into curriculum. In contrast, Los Angeles Times reports on parents who want to remove LGBT+ teachings from curriculum. The liberty of both sides is being encroached on.

First, I will illustrate how the lack of federal standards has created an uncertain and hostile environment for educational institutions. Second, I will explain why ignoring the issue is not helpful. Third, I will offer a solution, based on the IDEA, that can be used to set federal standards through civil law with economic incentives and aid.

For the purpose of this speech, "straight" refers to someone who only engages in romantic and physical relationships that are between one man and one woman. "Not heterosexual" refers to someone who engages in any form of intimate relationships that are not straight. "Transgender" refers to having secondary sex traits that do not align with primary sex traits.

Body

I. ILL

A. According to CDC's 2011-2021 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance report, published February 13th, 2023, 24.1% of students 13-17 years old openly identify as not heterosexual. Also, UCLA School of Law's press release on June 10th, 2022 reports that 1.43% of students 13-17 years old openly identify as transgender. By adding these stats together, we can determine that about 25.53% of children 13-17 years old are a part of the LGBT+ community. Though there may be a minor overcount due to potential overlap with transgender kids also being straight, there may also be an undercount due to the nature of "coming out." With these limitations in mind, I find it fair to say that about 1 in 4 children are a part of this marginalized community.

B. According to the National Institute of Health's report in 2014 and a follow-up in 2022, LGBT+ students tend to feel less safe at school. This leads to more truancies, lower grades, and poor social skills. As we saw with the death of Nex Benedict, the harassment and lack of safety leads to tragedy.

II. BLAME

A. The federal government's denial of its responsibility to pass a legal statute that marks sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes is both an attitudinal and existential problem. When considering the protests, it can be assumed that disapproval of LGBT+ people has affected government attitudes. However, for this argument, I will focus on the existential issue. Since the Civil Rights Act of 1964, there has been several attempts to amend it with various versions of the Equality Act: H.R. 14752 in May of 1974, H.R.15692 in June of 1974, H.R.16200 in July of 1974, H.R.3185 in July 2015, H.R.5 in February of 2021, and H.R.15 in June of

2023. None of these have been resolved. They are all just sitting in the House, except for H.R.5 from 2021. It made it through 107 House actions and into the Senate before being ignored.

B. Inadequacy of status quo

1. This is no brand-new issue. In 1997, the Journal of Pediatric Health Care published about the health issues of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth. President Biden's thoughts and prayers for Nex Benedict is not the first occurrence of presidential awareness of LGBT+ youth suffrage. Even Trump publicly commented on the issue live on CNN during his 2016 candidate campaign. The current status quo is to be allegedly supportive of LGBT+ youth while ignoring any real responsibility for their health and safety in legislation.

2. By pretending to care for LGBT+ youth while denying them legal protection, the federal government is driving a deeper wedge between the schools who want to include LGBT+ teachings and the parents who do not. There is nothing to protect these children from discrimination and nothing to encourage schools to be more inclusive.

III. CURE

A. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that offers a grant to educational institutions. To qualify for the grant, the institution must follow strict standards. The standards are not required to be an educator, but they are required to be awarded this grant. According to the 2021-2022 annual report from National Center for Education Statistics, 15% of public-school students receive services under the IDEA. This aligns with CDC's 2017 report that says 17% of American children ages 3-17 are disabled. Though this number may or may not be slightly different today, 2017 is the

most recent report from CDC regarding this matter. It is also fair to assume that not all disabled students will receive services because not all schools will follow the strict standards. However, the fact that the overwhelming majority of disabled students are receiving services indicates that a significant number of educational institutions are now providing non-discriminatory opportunity and improved education for disabled students. A disability is not a federally protected class. Yet, the federal government encourages and aids inclusivity of disabled students through civil law grants.

B. This can be done for LGBT+ students as well. Even though sexual orientation and gender identity are not federally protected classes, the federal government can encourage and aid inclusivity of LGBT+ students through civil law grants. IDEA clearly cannot and should not be used for this purpose. However, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is a civil rights law that encompasses a great amount of public schools' standards and funding. It includes opportunity grants for various situations and marginalized groups. Subsection 2, part B, sections 1201-1204 provide state assessment grants. Ken Robinson, an expert in education, mentions in his Ted talk how overemphasizing standardized testing stifles children's creativity by teaching to the test. I also assume that these scheduled audits can hardly generalize the school's actual performance. They are basically Good Samaritan grants. These sections can be amended to make room for LGBT+ funding.

Conclusion

Review main points: There are conflicting opinions about LGBT+ teachings in school, and both of those opinions are being stifling. This is causing even more discrimination and stress within educational institutions.

Restate thesis: To resolve the issue of freedom of expression and liberty of choice, Congress should offer civil educational grants for those who adopt LGBT+ standards by amending the ESSA.

Closing thoughts: We don't have to agree on everything, but I hope we at least agree that all people deserve Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

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