

Yolo County Is for Everyone

A Joint Letter from Residents of Yolo County

Over the past several months, extremists have repeatedly attacked some of Yolo County's valued public institutions—including our library, our annual Pride celebration, and our schools.

They have protested against expressions of LGBTQ pride, such as rainbow flags in classrooms, rainbow crosswalks on our streets, and LGBTQ-themed books in our libraries. They have objected to scientifically based curricula about gender and sexuality in our schools. They have publicly posted photos and the physical locations of teachers, students, librarians, and advocates on social media platforms, placing them at risk from an angry network of anti-LGBTQ extremists. They have spread prejudiced disinformation about the LGBTQ community to arouse outrage. They have deliberately courted attention from extremist media and, in the wake of this publicity, our library and schools have received multiple bomb threats, each accompanied by vicious anti-LGBTQ language. They claim to want to protect children, but instead, our children have been put in danger.

Our county is not alone. Libraries and schools across the nation have been similarly threatened, both for being LGBTQ-positive and also for promoting racial diversity and equality. Our experience in Yolo County is just one piece of a nationwide campaign to sow division, disrupt communities, and undermine the principle that public institutions must be open, inclusive, and safe for all of us—regardless of our differences.

With the collective voice of all who are signing this letter, we declare that they will not succeed. We reject the politics of division and hate. We do not simply accept the diversity of our county, our state, and our nation—we *embrace* it. Our community is stronger when our unique differences come together.

We believe that a spectrum of experiences and a free exchange of ideas are hallmarks of our democracy. We know that truth has the power to keep us free, and that lies carry a danger to inflame bitterness and hate. We reject tactics of fear and intimidation because they rupture the social contract. We assert that everyone has the right to go to school, visit a library, go to work, and live without fear of attack just for being who they are. We affirm that no amount of toxic politics will sever our commitments to each other. We insist on respect, inclusion, and safety for every child and teacher in our schools, every reader in our libraries, and every resident in our towns.

So today we declare that we will not allow division to poison our community. In Yolo County, our values include equality, dignity, and respect for everyone, without exception. We stand firm, and we stand together.