

PRINCE WILLIAM SCHOOL BOARD UPDATE:

GENDER IDENTITY & SCHOOL BATHROOMS

Last Fall, the Prince William School Board debated a change to the school's nondiscrimination equal employment policy that would impact the privacy and safety rights of our children.

Specifically, the School Board considered a broad update to the student and staff nondiscrimination policy to include "gender identity" and "sexual orientation" in the group of protected factors, along with race, color, religion, national origin, and gender. Adding "gender identity" would allow transgender students and staff to choose the bathroom, locker room, showers, and student overnight accommodations of their preferred choice, regardless of biological anatomy.

Because of the overwhelming community opposition to the measure, the School Board voted (by a vote of 5-1) on September 21, 2016 to delay the vote until June 21, 2017, with the hopes that the Supreme Court would rule on the matter before that time (which the Court has not). Now, the School Board will begin debating the measure again at the next meeting, on June 7, 2017. The 8-member School Board has 3 members who oppose this measure (Satterwhite, Deustch & Brann). To defeat this measure, the community must convince at least one more to vote against it. [CLICK HERE](#) to learn more about the Board.

To speak during the "citizens' time" at the June 7 meeting, residents must notify the School Board Clerk by phone at 703-791-8709; or by email at pwcsclerk@pwcs.edu. The list of speakers is determined by who signs up first. Residents are free to sign up now.

Why This Policy Is Bad for Prince William:

1. This Policy Change Violates Privacy Rights – Prince William County is a welcoming and compassionate place for all people, including our lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender neighbors, but this policy change would violate privacy rights for our children. Adding "gender identity" to the nondiscrimination policy would lead to unwanted encounters among children of opposite biological anatomy in, what should be, safe places. Students should not be forced to be exposed to students or adults of the opposite biological gender in a bathroom, locker room, or shower.

2. This Policy Invites More Sexual Activity & Possible Sexual Assault in Schools – In schools across America, and here in Prince William, consensual sexual activity, and even sexual assault, in bathroom stalls has become an unfortunate popular trend. Changing policies that affect bathrooms, locker rooms, and showers will only invite **more** sexual activity among children and teens in school. Schools should be a place for learning reading, arithmetic, and fine arts, yet throughout the last 10 years, sexuality has become too much of a focus in too many classrooms and school environments. Sexuality should be conversations for consensual adults outside our schools, not inside it. Our students have the right a safe environment.

3. This Policy Is Unnecessary – For years, Prince William Public Schools have protected and accommodated transgender students and staff in a respectful, private and genuine manner through site-based management. Therefore no change is needed regarding the use of bathrooms, locker rooms, and showers. Many of you (School Board members) talk frequently about the benefit of site-based management; the issue of accommodations for gender-questioning students should remain a site-based management responsibility. If you feel the need to make a policy change, please consider a compromise that does not impact bathrooms, locker rooms, showers, and student overnight accommodations, such as [what Loudoun County did](#).

4. This Policy Creates Legal Problems For County and Taxpayers – In August of 2016, the U.S. Supreme Court halted a lawsuit by a transgender student in Gloucester County, Virginia, effectively ruling that the County did not have to open up their bathrooms, locker rooms, and showers to opposite gender students. Changing this policy in Prince William could open up the County to frivolous lawsuits that drain precious taxpayer resources, while the constitutionality of this policy change is debated in the courts. Multiple courts have ruled against these policy changes across the nation. Many legal experts believe this issue will eventually reach the Supreme Court. Fairfax County has put their facility changes on hold because of legal issues. The Prince William School Board should therefore not take any action on this matter.

5. This Policy Fight Puts Unwanted Attention on LGBTQ Students – Most LGBTQ students want to live their life without unwanted attention, just like any other student. Pursuing this nondiscrimination policy adds a political spotlight on our transgender students that they don't want or need, especially as they are questioning their identity, and are very self-conscious. [Research shows](#) that many children who explore gender transition, often change their minds as adults. Unwanted political attention is not helpful as these students explore their identity. Sadly, this whole debate on the School Board is simply to help Chairman Ryan Sawyers' political career, as he now is running for Congress, and is rumored to be considering a run for Chairman of the Board of Supervisors in 2019. We should not put unwanted attention on our LGBTQ students just to benefit Ryan Sawyers' political career.

6. Opposition To This Policy Is Not About Religion – Unfortunately, news reports about this issue have mischaracterized the opposition as purely religious. This is not about religion, or sexuality, or gay marriage. Our concern is regarding the privacy and safety of all our students. This policy will do nothing to stop anti-LGBTQ bullying, and may even increase bullying and unwanted attention of those very students.