



March 2, 2021

*Testimony on the Governor's FY 2022-2023 Proposed Budget for Health Agencies*

Chair Osten, Chair Walker, Vice-Chair Hartley, Vice-Chair Dathan, Vice-Chair Nolan, Ranking Member Miner, Ranking Member France, and members of the appropriations committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this legislation.

I am the Chair of GLSEN Connecticut, an organization that advocates for LGBTQ+ inclusion in Connecticut schools. Our programming ranges from professional development for school staff to sending LGBTQ+ affirming books to schools and libraries. Our work reaches over 240 schools and libraries across Connecticut (in every county), impacting an estimated 155,000 Connecticut students.

I am writing to oppose the proposed \$100,000 cut to the LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network as part of the DPH budget. We are grateful to be listed as one of the organizations eligible for funding through the LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network, and for the Assembly for committing funding for this initiative. However, a 40% cut to the network's budget would prove disastrous for organizations like ours and our ability to adequately serve Connecticut LGBTQ+ youth. We request that the network continue to be funded at \$250,000.

According to the 2019 GLSEN National School Climate Survey, over 90% of Connecticut LGBTQ+ students reported hearing anti-LGBTQ remarks at school.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, 1 in 5 Connecticut LGBTQ+ students reported being physically harassed for their sexual orientation.<sup>2</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the need for LGBTQ supports in Connecticut: with schools closed, many LGBTQ youth have been away from their school support networks, and forced to spend excessive time with unsupportive family members.<sup>3</sup>

Thank you again for hearing my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions that you have.

Sincerely,  
Ashley Holbrooks  
Chair, GLSEN Connecticut

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<sup>1</sup> "School Climate for LGBTQ Students in Connecticut," GLSEN (2020), <https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/Connecticut-Snapshot-2019.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Valencia, Misha, "The Challenges of the Pandemic for Queer Youth," *The New York Times* (June 29, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/29/well/family/LGBTQ-youth-teenagers-pandemic-coronavirus.html>