

DEAR MISSISSIPPI AND NORTH CAROLINA EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS,

We want you to know that **we love you.**

Not only as you are, but also **because you are.**

Teaching and learning takes place in the head and in the heart. When we feel soul-filled, loved, and heard we learn at our very best and become sources of inspiration to others.

We join **you**, 269 children's book authors and illustrators¹, major corporations, and state governments, in **calling for the immediate repeal of the discriminatory legislation that Governor McCrory and Governor Bryant signed into law.**

"This legislation directly affects the **achievement, learning and lives of students and educators across your great states."**

Not only do these bills contradict the values this country was built upon, this legislation directly affects the **achievement, learning and lives** of students and educators across your great states.

Numerous studies have shown learning, school performance, and behavior in the classroom are negatively affected by a student's anxiety related to physical safety, self-worth, physical appearance, and concerns about the future².

The GLSEN *National School Climate Survey of America's Middle and High School Students*³ found that of the 7,800 LGBTQ youth surveyed:

- 85% were verbally harassed in the past year,
- 61% who reported physical or verbal harassment received no response,
- 30% missed at least one day of school because they felt unsafe,
- 68% avoided school functions because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable

This legislation, that has the potential to decrease students' ability to learn at their best, directly contradicts the Mississippi Department of Education's stated goal, "Ensuring a Bright Future for Every Child," and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's stated goal, "to prepare all students to become career and college ready."

We stand with you, because we love you. We stand with you because the right side of history is the one that supports inclusiveness, not bigotry; raises the voices of all children and adults, not demeans them. We stand with you and refuse to stay silent.

- We share your belief that **all children are potential-full, have words worth sharing and hearts worth loving.**
- We know that the diversity of our education colleagues **makes us stronger as a profession.**
- We know that embracing and fully living your gender-identity, orientation, and expression only **enhances your own ability to teach** and to **serve as a positive, strong role model for all students.**



We stand with your states' diverse, vibrant, and inspired students and states' diverse, vibrant and inspired educators because we love that you are.

With our love and fighting spirit,

Christopher Lehman and The Educator Collaborative Family

¹ Thank you Phil Bildner and colleagues for the inspiration to write our own open letter! Find the original author and illustrator's letter here: http://www.slj.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/OPEN_LETTER_040216_RJ.pdf
² Beilock et al. 2007; Schmader, Johns, & Forbes, 2008; Covington, 2000; Steele, 1997; Osborne 2006, 2007; Eysenck and Calvo, 1992; Owens, Stevenson, Norgate, & Hadwin, 2008; Grills-Taquechel, Norton, Ollendick, 2010
³ Most recent data from 2013. The 2015 data collection phase closed and is being compiled.