

*To: MPA Admissions Staff*

*From: Mia Maizel, MPA Applicant*

*Date: 02/01/2023*

***RE: Protecting LGBTQ+ Rights in Classrooms***

Restricting academic curricula about sexual orientation and gender identity in certain grade levels is harmful to students. Preventing age-appropriate education about different family structures and personal expression will delay important development of compassion for people's natural differences. A lack of language for young students who might not receive education outside of school will lead to misunderstandings and unanswered questions. Young students connected to the LGBTQ+ community either personally or through the community need to have unrestricted access to appropriate language and feel safe expressing themselves.

Florida's "Parental Rights in Education" bill passed in 2022, also known as a "Don't Say Gay" bill, works to erase LGBTQ+ identity, history, and culture. Parental support for the bill claims caregivers have a right to be involved in their child's education and that curriculum about LGBTQ+ individuals can be inappropriate for younger students. Parental involvement is not the issue, but rather the discrimination against LGBTQ+ identities, including LGBTQ+ parents. The depiction and inclusion of heterosexual relationships are not up for discussion or considered sexual, therefore nor should those of homosexual relationships. Misinterpretation of the bills' broad language such as the phrases "age appropriate" and "classroom instruction" could create a classroom atmosphere where teachers avoid the subjects entirely out of fear of lawsuits.

In 2021, Sam Ames, the Director of Advocacy and Government Affairs at The Trevor Project, states that "The Trevor Project's research has found that LGBTQ+ youth who learned about LGBTQ+ issues or people in classes at school had 23% lower odds of reporting a suicide attempt in the past year." The mental health of LGBTQ+ youth is negatively impacted by this bill that

has been a part of recent debates about state laws directly restricting their rights. LGBTQ+ individuals in Florida, specifically students, need support as this bill unfortunately takes effect.