

# BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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## **City Council Resolution 21-0069R** **Investigative Hearing – Well-being of the Transgender Community in Baltimore**

November 17, 2021

Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) supports Council Resolution 21-0069R, which seeks to require City Schools and various city agencies to update the Council on services provided to and the general well-being of the transgender community in Baltimore City.

City Schools' Policy JBB and Administrative Regulation JBB-RA (Sex-Based Discrimination – Students) were adopted by the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners (Board) in April 2019. Policy JBB confirms that City Schools' prohibition against sex-based discrimination includes discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and nonconformance to stereotypical notions of masculinity or femininity. As such, the policy and administrative regulation apply to transgender students.

Policy JBB covers key topics, including:

- Use of pronouns
- Dress codes
- Access to gender-segregated facilities
- Athletics and physical education
- Student records

On October 12, 2021, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners reviewed a presentation regarding City Schools' ongoing efforts to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ+) students and to ensure robust compliance with Policy JBB and other legal requirements. The presentation summarized progress on these initiatives since prior updates to the Board on January 26, 2021 and August 24, 2020. The PowerPoint for the October 12, 2021 presentation is available at this link:

[https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/bcpss/Board.nsf/files/C7JN5L5C2172/\\$file/LGBTQ%2B%20Support%20Board%20Presentation%20October%202021-%20FINAL%20Updated.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/bcpss/Board.nsf/files/C7JN5L5C2172/$file/LGBTQ%2B%20Support%20Board%20Presentation%20October%202021-%20FINAL%20Updated.pdf)

As detailed in the presentation, City Schools has organized efforts across offices and schools into key work streams:

- Policy Interpretation and Implementation
- Student Engagement, Support, and Wholeness
- Staff Professional Development
- Academics
- Data Management, Monitoring, and Communication

- Facilities

To support the implementation of this work, City Schools has established a cross-functional team comprised of community stakeholders, central office staff, and school-based staff, and is recruiting students to also serve as key thought partners in this work (more on that approach below). The mission statement adopted by the cross-functional team is to develop and implement supportive practices that will contribute to safe and secure environments for all those we serve in LGBTQ+ community, by building the capacity of the City Schools community in the work; by ensuring robust compliance with legal requirements and Board policies; and by reporting and responding to complaints while working to reduce the occurrence of policy violations.

One example of the cross-functional team's work is the development of a proactive student support protocol. Consistent with Policy JBB, this tool is designed for City Schools staff to facilitate discussions with LGBTQ+ students to:

- Help ensure they are safe and supported at school and in school-based activities;
- Help them think proactively about how to navigate relationships and situations that may arise at school;
- Promote equal access and equal opportunity for students to participate in school programs and activities; and
- Provide a roadmap for support from school staff to ensure that students feel safe and included in school, resulting in a more positive and successful school experience.

Developed based on our review of similar protocols from other school districts, the student support protocol was piloted on an as-needed basis in the Spring 2021, and it is being rolled out more broadly during the 2021-2022 school year, with support from City Schools' Department of Fair Practices and other central office stakeholders represented on the cross-functional team. The student support protocol is available on the Department of Fair Practices' redesigned website, along with other resources to support LGBTQ+ students, at this link:

<https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/student-fair-practices>.

The cross-functional team also has launched a listening campaign to engage students from Gender Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) and similar LGBTQ+ support groups, which are now active at 40 schools across Baltimore City. The purposes of these student listening sessions are to:

- Help assess whether Policy JBB is being implemented with fidelity;
- Hear from LGBTQ+ students regarding their experiences in school and to understand school climate and culture in City Schools as it relates to LGBTQ+ support;
- Learn student perspectives on what they are learning in class about LGBTQ+ issues;
- Hear student perspectives on bullying and other safety issues affecting LGBTQ+ students;
- Gather ideas for trainings, activities, supportive measures, etc., that will contribute to the safety and well-being of LGBTQ+ students; and
- Increase student voice and representation in City Schools' LGBTQ+ initiatives.

Based on student feedback, the cross-functional team intends to make adjustments to LGBTQ+

support initiatives going forward.

In conclusion, City Schools has demonstrated a firm public commitment to supporting the safety and well-being of our transgender student population. We are pleased to provide additional information upon request.

Thank you for including City Schools in this important process, and for the City Council's longstanding support for and advocacy on behalf of our schools and students.

