

Dear AHEAD Members,

Following the 2016 AHEAD International Conference, where then-President Bea Awonyi issued a call to action around supporting students of color and other marginalized students, AHEAD sent out an email to all members, asking you to use your voices, energy, and abilities to support all students who have less privilege than others. Due to recent events, we are reaching out to you once more to draw your attention to an issue that is affecting students (some of whom have disabilities) across the country.

On February 22, 2017, the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education rescinded orders protecting transgender (trans\*) identified individuals' rights to utilize the bathroom corresponding with their gender identity. This decision reverses direction from guidance issued in 2015 and 2016 which interpreted this protection to be provided under Title IX provisions. Although some states have already begun passing legislation that picks up where this left off, AHEAD views this guidance as having a potentially adverse impact on the ability of trans\* students to live fully public lives. In response to that decision, AHEAD reaffirms its commitment to acting in solidarity with trans\* communities toward justice, equity, and inclusion.

Although trans\* identity and disability are not one in the same, some individuals do identify as both trans\* and having a disability. Numerous commonalities and opportunities for solidarity exist which connect these two communities. The following statistics from the more than 27,000 respondents who took the 2015 Trans Health Survey demonstrate the likelihood that trans\* students are needing your office's supports and resources:

- 47% have experienced sexual assault
- 39% experienced significant psychological distress during the month prior to completing the survey
- 40% reported having attempted suicide (9 times the rate of the U.S. population)

AHEAD recognizes that while we want to be doing all we can for our students, many of us don't come to our roles with a vocabulary or toolkit for working specifically with disabled trans\* students. Here are some ideas for how we can each work to advance trans\* justice on our campuses:

- Visit the website for the AHEAD LGBTQA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Ally) Special Interest Group.
- Be a good ally! Watch this helpful and short video, 5 Tips for Being a Good Ally.
- Attend campus events sponsored by LGBTQ students and programs to demonstrate the support of your office and acknowledge the intersectionality that exists.
- Support initiatives on campus that push for gender affirming procedures, name change policy, and gender inclusive restrooms and locker rooms. Trans\* students, disabled students (some of whom have caregivers of other gender identities), and students with children will all benefit substantially from having more of these spaces across campus.
- Get involved with the Safe Zone committee on your campus or start one! Everything you need to do that is right here at <http://thesafezoneproject.com/>.

- Get engaged with your representatives around decisions being made at the local and federal level that affect the lives of trans\* people. If you need talking points or want to support organizations doing this work, we recommend checking out the American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU, or the National Center for Transgender Equality ( NCTE).

As professionals dedicated to advancing civil rights for students with disabilities, we understand the critical impact of social justice and equity for those who have been excluded by society. Just as individuals with disabilities have been marginalized, so too have trans\* people. We must continue to support our trans\* students with disabilities and stand in solidarity with all trans\* students to demonstrate our commitment to their equal access and equal opportunity rights to education.

If you have ideas and input for how we can move forward in amplifying the concerns of trans\* students and AHEAD members who are trans\*, please contact [ahead@ahead.org](mailto:ahead@ahead.org). Furthermore, if you would like to get involved, we encourage and welcome your participation in this effort. Please contact any of the undersigned to get involved in effecting positive change.

Sincerely,

Stephan Smith, Executive Director of AHEAD

Jamie Axelrod, President of AHEAD

Liz Thomson, Co-Chair of the Standing Committee on Diversity

Adam Crawford, Co-Chair of the Standing Committee on Diversity

Teryn Robinson, Co-Chair of the LGBTQA SIG

Jen Dugger, Co-Chair of the LGBTQA SIG

Crystal Hill, Co-Chair of the REDD SIG