



March 29, 2023

The Honorable John Laird
1021 O Street, Suite 8720
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: (916) 651-4017

RE: Support for SB 857 (Laird)

Dear Senator Laird:

The California Youth Empowerment Network (CAYEN) is pleased to support Senate Bill 857, legislation which would require the Superintendent of Public Instruction to convene an advisory task force to identify the statewide needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and plus (LGBTQ+) pupils and to assist in implementing supportive policies and initiatives to address LGBTQ+ pupil education.

The California Youth Empowerment Network (CAYEN) is a youth-led statewide network comprised of TAY Action Teams and CAYEN Board members which engages, empowers and represents Transitional Age Youth (TAY), ages 15-26, in mental health advocacy on issues that directly affect TAY. Since CAYEN's inception in 2006, CAYEN has taken many forms of action to empower TAY in their personal lives and spark progressive change in public policy.

When curriculum, policy, strategic plans, or general decision-making in education occurs, it is important that we take into consideration the perspectives of our most underserved and disproportionately impacted communities. Providing a space for impacted groups to be a part of the decision-making process guarantees the inclusion of those perspectives in the process.

As a TAY led organization, we prioritize direct representation and meaningful engagement for youth. For our LGBTQ+ community, there are a variety of needs that are not being addressed in our education system. Senate Bill 857 not only works to identify what those needs are but requires the LGBTQ+ community to be a part of the taskforce making the identifications and recommendations.

For these reasons, we support SB 857. If you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at dthirakul@mhac.org, or our Interim Director of Public Policy, Karen Vicari at kvicari@mhacofca.org.

In Community,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Thirakul', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Danny Thirakul
Public Policy Coordinator
California Youth Empowerment Network