



STATEMENT ON HB 1557

On Thursday, March 3rd, Gen-Z for Change Political Strategy Associate Jack Petocz was suspended from Flagler Palm Coast High School after leading a pre-approved rally in opposition to the homophobic and discriminatory legislation being pushed by Governor Ron DeSantis and Florida Republicans. Jack and other students across Florida were peacefully demonstrating their freedom of speech, expression, and right to protest, when the FPC admin began to unconstitutionally confiscate the pride flags of students attending the FPC rally. This is just one example of the discrimination that LGBTQ+ youth are facing, and it will only increase if Florida H.B 1557, or the “Don’t Say Gay Bill”, becomes law.

These brave students protested together to highlight that they are united as a community and that they will stand up to oppressive and discriminatory legislation in the state of Florida. Now, we would like to continue in our constitutional right to protest. Gen-Z for Change, along with Equality Florida and Voters of Tomorrow, will be leading a protest at the Florida State Capital on Monday, March 7th from 10 AM-12 PM, to make it clear to the Florida legislature that this kind of discriminatory and homophobic legislation will not be tolerated.

In addition to the protest, we are formally requesting a meeting with Governor Ron DeSantis to discuss his reasoning for supporting the bill, and give him a first hand encounter with the very students and young people who this legislation seeks to oppress. We are also requesting a meeting with State Senator Wilton Simpson to inform him on how breaking from the extreme right-wing republicans within the Florida legislature, and voting in opposition of this bill would be protecting countless young lives and identities in the state of Florida.

We sincerely hope that both Governor DeSantis and Senator Simpson will uphold the oath of office they have both sworn, and protect the constitutional rights of Florida youth, as well as listening to the constituents they have sworn to represent.

We welcome students, parents, and community members from across the State of Florida and beyond to join us at the capital to protest this bill and utilize our constitutional freedoms to make our voices heard. We are proud of Jack and every LGBTQ+ youth who has taken action, and we will continue to support the LGBTQ+ Community with Pride—because unlike those who seek to erase our identities; We are proud of who we are and we are not afraid to say gay.

Sincerely,
The Gen-Z for Change Team