

Director Murray,

On August 22, 2023, a poll report authored by the Monmouth University Polling Institute titled “New Jersey: Majority Support Parental Notification for Gender Identity” was published – and widely broadcast – by NJ news and social media outlets.

As parents, family members, friends, colleagues, allies, and organizations representing the interests of transgender, non-binary, intersex, of New Jersey youth, we are deeply upset with the poll’s shortcomings, including, but not limited to, not reflecting gender expansive identities among respondents, demonstrating a complete lack of sensitivity towards the documented impacts of discrimination on transgender youth, and including blatantly confusing, and complicated questions regarding parental notification practices that would, if adopted, likely violate the Law Against Discrimination in NJ.

Were such a poll necessary, it should have provided clearly defined terminology for respondents. It should have demonstrated construction by people with competencies of LGBTQ+ issues, and actually sought the input of people impacted by the issues at hand. Not least, it could have been a poll that *acknowledged the existence of transgender people* by having gender options that allow respondents to indicate a gender identity representative of their experience and expression in the demographics.

The very real and negative impact this specific poll has on New Jerseyans – transgender New Jerseyans and parents, family and friends of transgender New Jerseyans especially – cannot be overstated. We deserve better. In a time when transgender and nonbinary youth are being singled out for this intense and largely negative attention, this poll (and how it was reported) contributed to the irresponsible trend of shaping schools into contested spaces, which benefits no student.

Readily available data show us that real harm in terms of both health and academic outcomes disproportionately affect LGBTQ+ youth, primarily as a result of lack of affirmation in schools and home.

From the Trevor Project 2023 Mental Health Survey:

Roughly half of transgender and nonbinary young people found their school to be gender-affirming, and those who did reported lower rates of attempting suicide.

Nearly 2 in 3 LGBTQ young people said that hearing about potential state or local laws banning people from discussing LGBTQ people at school made their mental health a lot worse.

The health and well being of transgender and non-binary students is an urgent matter. When they are not seen and affirmed in school, when schools do not have policies affirming their rights, existence, and use of the public school in its entirety, these students come to school less, do more poorly academically, in turn impacting their opportunities beyond high school.

I am signing this letter [along with a broad coalition of advocates](#), and call for you and your colleagues in this work to do better, do so more responsibly, and do so with the ability to not further harm some of our most vulnerable youth.