



ACTION ALERT

The Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights

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State House Station, P.O. Box 206
Boston, MA 02133

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OCT. 13: RALLY ON BEACON HILL FOR GAY AND LESBIAN STUDENTS RIGHTS BILL

The Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights is holding a large rally on Wednesday, Oct. 13, at 4:00 p.m. in Nurses Hall at the State House. The rally will urge the Massachusetts Legislature to pass H. 3353, the Gay and Lesbian Students Rights Bill.

The Coalition has staged a number of well-attended rallies in the last four years at the State House as a core part of our successful efforts to pass the Gay Civil Rights Bill, the Hate Crimes Reporting Act, and the bill which led to the formation of Gov. Weld's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth.

Massachusetts law currently protects students against discrimination in terms of admission to public school or access to school courses and activities on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, religion, and national origin. H. 3353, if passed, will add sexual orientation to the protected classes.

The legislation was filed by the Student Advisory Council, a statewide network of students working on a number of educational initiatives. The bill has forty-one co-sponsors, with Rep. Byron Rushing (D-Boston) and Sen. Robert Havern (D-Arlington) as the chief sponsors.

"The Gay and Lesbian Students Rights Bill has an excellent chance of passing in 1993 if we can muster grassroots support for it through the October 13th rally and through hundreds of letters to legislators," says David LaFontaine, Political Director of the Coalition. *"The fundamental right of gay and lesbian students to a public school education, an education free of harassment and discrimination, needs to be protected by Massachusetts law."*

Organizations and individuals from around Massachusetts are encouraged to attend the October 13th rally.



Lieutenant Governor Paul Cellucci will be a featured speaker at the Rally on October 13th.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO MAKE THE OCTOBER 13TH RALLY A GREAT SUCCESS:

- Bring a group of friends and family members to the rally.
- Bring your organizational banner and members of your organization to the State House.
- Contact the Coalition at (617) 828-3039 to volunteer your time on the Rally Planning Committee.

Will gay students get some protection? 9/1993

(continued from page threee)

Hall at the State House.

House Bill 3353, which was written by high school students, would add the phrase "sexual orientation" to the list of categories protecting students against discrimination.

Currently, that list only extends to protect students on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

The school bill, which has been endorsed by Gov. William F. Weld and state Education Commissioner Robert Antonucci, would also enable Gov. Weld's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth to "leverage the 300 school districts in the state to put their own [gay and lesbian student] policies in place," LaFontaine said.

In February, the Governor's Commission gave a list of recommendations to help protect gay students from harassment and discrimination. The state Board of Education has backed a partial list of those recommendations, including sensitivity training for teachers, in-school counseling for gay students' families and school-based support groups for gay and lesbian students.

"It adds another layer to the foundation of support for gay students," LaFontaine said. "They already have the foundation of Weld's support, but this would add the clout of the state legislature's support."

He said a school could be sued "for being out of line with the spirit of the law," so it could increase the number of school systems willing to sponsor programs for gay and lesbian youth. Of the state's 300 school systems, LaFontaine said only about 20 have gay youth programs currently in place.

Rally organizers said they are hoping between 500 and 1,000 people show up to support the bill, and say they are contacting students and teachers across the state, urging them to bring friends and family members to the rally. If those numbers show, it will be the second largest gay rights rally held at the State House, second to a rally held in support of the gay rights bill in Oct., 1989.

the rally said they believe if the bill were passed it will not only make their school safer, but schools more comfortable for teens to be openly gay or lesbian.

"I started a gay/straight alliance at my school last year and there has been some negative reaction," said Mark DeLellis, a 17-year-old senior at Belmont High School. "The signs [advertising meetings] always get torn down. I don't think some people took it all that seriously."

Framingham State College freshman Robert Cleary said he had to travel an hour from his home in Plymouth to attend meetings of the Boston Allinace of Gay and Lesbian Youth, because there was no local support group for gay teens.

"If this bill can help push schools to form student support groups, it would make things better for kids who aren't near the city," he said.

Teens organizing the rally said there has been little help from the adult gay community in organizing and fundraising. To raise money for flyers advertising the event, teens have held parties at their homes, charging their friends to attend.

"[Adults] have the gay rights bill," said DeLellis. "But it doesn't cover people under 18. I think there's a stigma attached to gay youth."

LaFontaine said he thinks many lesbians and gay men don't get involved with gay youth issues because "they would rather forget those early years because they were painful."

In addition to the rally, the Coalition is also planning a lobbying day in the State House on Oct. 20. Teens attended a lobbying workshop on Sept. 28 and will go through the State House on lobbying day telling their representatives they support the school bill.

(The gay student rights bill rally begins at 4 p.m. on Oct. 13 at the State House. For more information, call the Coalition at 617-538-2920.)



Gay teenagers, left to right, Robert Cleary, Chris Hannon, Jessica Byers and Mark DeLellis are all taking part in planning an Oct. 13 rally to drum up support for a bill currently under consideration on Beacon Hill that would offer protection to gay public school students.

Protection for gay students?

Maybe — but only if adult gay men and lesbians push Beacon Hill

BW 9.30-93
by Christopher Muther

Chris Hannon was harassed so badly at Boston Catholic High School, the 16-year-old dropped out of the private school and is now looking for a public school with students more tolerant of his sexuality.

"When I started at B.C. I tried to keep to myself; I tried to keep my head down" he said. "Both my brothers went there and they're both gay and that's what they told me to do."

It is hoped, however, that public school students who are harassed or discriminated against will soon have another option besides dropping out of school. A proposed Massachusetts House of Representatives bill would offer legal redress to students who feel they have been discriminated against in "admission to a public school of any town, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study" in any public school in the state, according to a January 1993 House document.

"We could be seeing some inter-

esting law suits as a result of this bill," said David LaFontaine, political director of the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights. "Students could sue a school for reimbursement of tuition at another school where they wouldn't be harassed."

But passage of the measure is far from certain. To give the school safety bill a boost in the state legislature, the Coalition is sponsoring a rally at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 13 in Nurses

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