



Council of Ontario Directors of Education Statement on Supporting Students and Gender Expression

The Council of Ontario Directors of Education, representing the 73 Directors from across all four publicly funded school systems is deeply committed to upholding the human rights of all students and staff as a requirement and legal obligation within the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. While our goal is to promote positive relationships with all families, we know that some students do not have access to supports and spaces where their identities are affirmed. As a result, this may lead to the increased risk of bullying, acts of self-harm, and adverse impacts to students' mental health and well-being.

As supported by School Mental Health Ontario, healthy and affirming conditions and environments must be actively fostered, and in some instances, this may be by someone other than a parent/guardian. Gender affirming practices such as honouring chosen names and/or pronouns, and other expressions of gender within school settings positively contribute to a student's sense of safety, belonging and inclusion.

The Directors of Education in Ontario are firm in their resolve to support, protect and validate the human rights and dignity of all students and staff who identify as 2SLGBTQ+. This ensures that they can enjoy the same opportunities and human rights afforded to their peers within public educational settings.