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For Immediate Release

Contact:

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Harassment & Bullying in Schools - An Open Community Forum on Safe Schools

Austin, Texas (September 8, 2009) – Every student in Texas schools deserves an education free from the harmful physical and emotional effects of harassment and bullying. However, as schools across the state are reopening for the Fall term, thousands of Texas children dread going to school to face the taunts, jeers, humiliation, physical intimidation and pain inflicted through harassment and bullying.

The Equality Texas Foundation is concerned that many school districts' current policies on bullying and harassment may be inadequate, or inadequately enforced. Although Texas' schools have worked to make safe schools a reality by putting in place bullying and harassment policies required by the Texas Education Code, we believe current statutes do not yet adequately address the prevention, intervention, and elimination of bullying and harassment from our schools.

Although well-defined and communicated policies help deal with bullying and harassment when it happens, a comprehensive program is necessary for prevention. Programs that integrate a data-tracking system for bullying and harassment incidents, a robust district-level policy that is consistently enforced, and a research-proven program to educate both students and staff about bullying and harassment have been found to be the most effective.

On Wednesday, September 16, 2009, the Equality Texas Foundation will host the first of several open community forums on safe schools.

Safe Schools Forum

Wednesday, September 16, 2009 at 6:00 p.m.
Baker School Cafeteria
3908 Avenue B, Austin, TX 78751

Panelists:

Kime Mitchell – Parent of a bullied child in the Georgetown ISD
Megan Flowers – Coordinator, No Place for Hate program of the Anti-Defamation League
Dianna Groves – Student Intervention Specialist, Dept. of Student Support, Austin ISD
Eric Metcalf – Chief Program Officer, Communities in Schools of Central Texas

Moderator:

Martha Oestreich – Board Chair, Equality Texas Foundation & Executive Director of Development, UT Division of Diversity and Community Engagement

Parents and students are encouraged to join us for this important open discussion on school safety.

This forum is presented by Equality Texas Foundation, in collaboration with the City of Austin Human Rights Commission, the Anti-Defamation League, the Texas Civil Rights Project, and the Texas GSA Network – a project of Out Youth.

Additional Community Forums on Safe Schools are scheduled for Houston, San Antonio, El Paso, and Dallas/Fort Worth.



Equality Texas Foundation educates and engages the public about policies and their effect on Texans of all sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions.

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