



John C. Austin

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Austin Releases Emails Detailing Process of Developing State Board Draft LGBT Guidance**

***Shows Transparent Process of SBE/MDE Developing Best Practice Recommendations to Support Better Learning and Safety for LGBT Students in Response to Needs of Michigan Educators***

Today I am happily sharing emails sought under the Freedom of Information Act by the Right Wing national Blog “the Daily Caller” that clearly demonstrate the attacks regarding the development of this draft guidance are nothing more than a smear campaign against the Board and our work in support of LGBTQ student safety and achievement. These emails, and the fact sheet and timeline of events released with them, clearly document the routine way the State Board (SBE) and Department of Education (MDE)) continued years of support for hundreds of Michigan school districts in meeting the educational needs of LGBT students, by charging an expert workgroup to develop voluntary guidance requested by Michigan school districts. These districts want information and best practices to create school environments that can help Michigan’s 150,000 LGB and a growing number of students identifying as transgender stay safe, stay in school, and improve their academic performance; as well as understand better their obligations under federal civil rights law. It is the role of the SBE to provide this assistance and as its President, I will continue to work to ensure that our schools have a framework to meet these critical and basic educational needs.

The guidance was developed with full SBE knowledge and support, and only began to be attacked a week after being routinely presented to the Board and the initiation of public comment, the first step in the guidance discussion process, when: Tucker Carlson’s Daily Caller blog published misleading and factually inaccurate accounts regarding the guidance; Anti- Common Core groups sent action alerts with incorrect information encouraging attacks on the guidance; and Republican Legislators—advised of the process throughout --were encouraged to publicly attack the guidance, and the State Board of Education.

In spite of the a continuing campaign to misrepresent and raise fears about the guidance, including paid robo-calls and postcards campaigns targeting me and the State Board, thousands of parents, students,

mental health professionals, education and business organizations are weighing in to support these important protections and assists to learning that Michigan school districts can voluntarily and flexibly apply to improve life and learning outcomes for LGBT students.

As is clear from the record, I have encouraged a broad and thoughtful public discussion of the importance of helping all our young people -- whatever race, religion or sexual orientation or gender identify -- stay safe in school, knock down learning obstacles, and get the education they deserve.

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