

28 Jun 21

Dr. Sabbah,

Thank you for your letter of May 19th in response to my concern regarding Santa Cruz County schools – including my daughter’s school, San Lorenzo Valley High School – flying the LGBTQ+ pride flag during a week in May. While I appreciate your response, I do not believe you addressed my concern. Please allow me to indicate how, as well as to respond to the content of your letter.

First, your letter does not acknowledge how flying an LGBTQ+ pride flag over a public school campus directly offends the convictions of students (and parents) who do not share the LGBTQ+ philosophy. My point is not that schools cannot, in some appropriate manner, address LGBTQ+ issues and history. My point is that doing so by flying the LGBTQ+ pride flag is unnecessary, offensive, and discriminatory. *Is it the County’s policy to discriminate against students who cannot condone the LGBTQ+ lifestyle by requiring them to attend school under a flag they find profoundly objectionable?* You stated in your letter that, “Our job in education is to educate and support all students and their families.” And yet, the policy against which I’ve raised an objection – namely the flying of an unnecessary and inappropriate flag – militates against that stated purpose. How is your office “support[ing] all students and their families” by coercing some to honor a flag they cannot honor? Doesn’t such action border on the dictatorial?

Second, your letter highlights the Santa Cruz County Office of Education’s work to “actively implement the laws to create safe spaces for our LGBTQ students,” and references the California Education Code, Seth’s Law, and the FAIR Education Act. In listing these three standards, you mentioned “discrimination,” “harassment,” and “[bias] against LGBTQ students.” I am not clear how these standards pertain to the issue I raised in my initial letter. Nothing that either my daughter or I articulated advocates for “discrimination,” “harassment,” or “bias,” against LGBTQ+ students; far from it. I hope you did not mean to suggest that our letters called for discriminatory action on the part of any school or county authorities. I would find such a charge quite offensive and irresponsible on your part. Schools can fulfill their requirements vis-à-vis Harvey Milk Day (if indeed such requirements exist) without the unnecessarily offensive act of requiring students who cannot condone the LGBTQ+ philosophy to attend school beneath the LGBTQ+ pride flag.

Third, near the end your letter states that, “...the U.S. Government has authorized the flying of rainbow flags at U.S. Embassies across the world.” Are you also aware that perhaps the largest portion of the federal government – namely the Department of Defense – did not authorize the flying/display of LGBTQ+ pride flags, even as it otherwise continued to commemorate Pride Month? Maybe this is because the DoD, more than most, understands the significance of a flag. Those whose mission entails fighting and dying beneath our national flag understand the way in which a flag makes demands on those who live and work within its shadow. The U.S. flag and the flag of California rightly make such demands on citizens of our country and residents of this state. The LGBTQ+ pride flag has no

commensurate authority and thus should not be flown in a public place; nor indeed should any other partisan standard.

Finally, by flying a flag of partisan social, moral, and political persuasion, Santa Cruz County schools enter dangerous ground. As public entities, our schools cannot, with integrity, give literal airtime to one group and refuse to give equal voice to opposing views. I will never demand that we require LGBTQ+ individuals attend school with a Christian flag flying on the pole. That would be a violation of many such persons' conscience, and thus distasteful to me. I ask that your office treat my daughter and others like her with the same respect.

As I expressed to the San Lorenzo Valley Unified School District on June 9th, in the future, please let us content ourselves with flags that rightly belong on a public school flagpole – the flag of the United States, and the flag of the State of California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "P.J.D.", written in dark ink.

P.J. Davis