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April 14, 2023

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 3 million members of the National Education Association, dedicated and trusted professionals who teach and support nearly 50 million students in public schools across America, we urge you to vote **NO** on H.R.734. Votes related to this bill may be included in the NEA Report Card for the 118th Congress.

NEA members oppose H.R. 734 because it would exclude transgender students from participating in activities and opportunities that should be available to *all* students. The same groups that are intent upon banning books from school libraries and censoring history lessons are now consumed with which bathrooms students use and their choice of personal pronouns—and these groups have found common cause with some members of Congress.

These are distractions that keep us from dealing with the very real challenges that educators, parents, and students are beseeching elected leaders to focus on, including:

- the rise in gun violence in communities of all sizes and descriptions;
- the dire shortage of educators;
- students' need for school-based mental health care; and
- the need for resources that will enable public schools to provide one-on-one attention and the latest technology, textbooks, and learning materials.

H.R. 734 does not strengthen Title IX or protect girls and women in sports. It does nothing to promote equity in resources, funding, or opportunity, or to tackle the sexual abuses of athletes and subsequent cover-ups that have occurred in women's sports. The bill's purpose is to further divide our nation, and it is using an extremely vulnerable population to do so.

H.R. 734 will degrade transgender students' emotional and mental health. Research in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* reports that 82 percent of transgender individuals have considered suicide, and more than 40 percent have attempted it, with "[suicidality highest among transgender youth](#)." The study adds: "...youth who do not feel a sense of belonging at school have a greater suicide risk."

A recent Washington Post-KFF poll underscores how unwelcome transgender adults felt in school: [45 percent reported feeling unsafe when they were at school](#), compared to 10 percent of cisgender adults who said they felt unsafe as students. H.R. 734, by excluding transgender students from participating in sports, would worsen their circumstances and compound feelings of isolation and "otherness" by screaming into a legislative bullhorn: "You are not welcome. You are not deserving of the same opportunities available to other students."

H.R. 734 could subject students, whether or not they are transgender, to invasions of privacy. These could include obsessive policing and monitoring of young people's bodies in attempts to investigate and determine a student's gender, as has happened in some states. Such actions would not only harm and humiliate individuals, but also lead to narrow, outdated, and homophobic notions of what it means to be "feminine" or "masculine." No

legislative chamber, school board, or athletics association should concern itself with these sensitive, private issues.

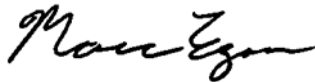
H.R. 734 erodes the fairness and equity that generations of Americans have struggled to achieve. It is a dangerous, mean-spirited attempt to erase transgender children from public life that violates our fundamental rights and values. By legalizing discrimination, the bill weakens our democracy.

History is full of horrific examples of what happens when laws are implemented that keep specific groups out of workplaces and schools, restrict them from neighborhoods, and deny them the chance to thrive. Not only do the individuals themselves suffer greatly, but our collective humanity is diminished. As Dr. King said, we are all “caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

Educators throughout our nation understand this perhaps better than most. Their careers are devoted to seeing and appreciating their students’ individuality, while also reinforcing the lesson most of us learned as children: Treat others with the same respect, understanding, and compassion that you would want for yourself and those you love.

Parents and educators are united on the challenges that confront our schools, and we ask that members of Congress work with us on these difficult issues. Please support student learning and development by ensuring that students across our great nation—no matter their race, background, sexual orientation, or gender identity—are respected, kept safe from gun violence in their schools and communities, and have the resources, one-on-one attention, and well-rounded curricula they need and deserve. **Vote NO on H.R. 734.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc Egan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association