

From: Drayton ValleyDevon [mailto:DraytonValley.Devon@assembly.ab.ca]
Sent: Wednesday, November 08, 2017 1:33 PM
To: Bill 10 Court Challenge Org
Subject: RE: Alberta Bill 10 and Bill 24 Analysis

Dear Carman,

Thank you for your correspondence regarding Bill 24, *An Act to Support Gay-Straight Alliances*. As the MLA for Drayton Valley – Devon and the Education Critic, I am happy to respond.

First, let me begin by stating unequivocally that the United Conservative Party Caucus supports efforts to make schools free of bullying, and to provide peer support, counselling and safe spaces for kids who might be subject to bullying, especially if that bullying or prejudice is because of their sexual identity.

We also support Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), which became the law when Bill 10 was passed unanimously in the Legislature in 2015 with support from both UCP legacy caucuses. We do not support the mandatory notification of parents regarding the involvement of students in GSAs nor have we ever proposed schools “out” gay students.

Our caucus has taken time to thoughtfully consider this legislation and its implications. We have done so with the best interests of children, especially children at risk, in mind. After careful consideration, we have come to a consensus to support students, parents and teachers by opposing Bill 24.

We believe that teachers, not politicians, should decide when it makes sense to engage parents and that our highly-trained educators are in a much better position than politicians to exercise their discretion on what is in the best interests of a child.

We are especially concerned that this legislation would undermine the longstanding legal obligation of schools to inform parents when their children are being taught material related to religion or human sexuality. According to the Alberta Teachers’ Association, GSAs can include curriculum and school wide educational activities, which is a direct violation of the spirit of the *School Act*.

In short, we do not believe a Bill that prevents teachers from responding to each child’s unique individual circumstances, takes authority out of the hands of schools and places it in the hands of the Minister, and cuts all Alberta parents out of conversations regarding their child’s wellbeing, is in the best interest of students.

Thank you again for reaching out with your concerns. If you require any additional information, please don’t hesitate to contact my office.

Kind regards,

Mark Smith

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