

YouthCO HIV and Hep C Society of BC  
205 – 568 Seymour Street  
Vancouver, BC V5K 1L4

29 May, 2014

Vancouver School Board  
Committee III – Education & Student Services  
1580 West Broadway  
Vancouver, BC V6J 5K8

Dear Committee:

We are writing on behalf of YouthCO HIV & Hep C Society of BC to express our support for the Vancouver School Board's revised policy ACB and regulations ACB-1 for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities.

YouthCO seeks to engage, educate and empower young people living with or at-risk of HIV and Hep C through peer education and support. We strengthen our movement through peer education and support, shared leadership, and meaningful community engagement. Our organization delivers peer-lead workshops throughout the lower mainland and within VSB schools that educate youth about sexual health and harm reduction in order to make informed decisions about their own health and well-being.

Creating more inclusive and healthy school environments for all young people, and especially those who may face greater barriers to health, is important to our work in improving young people's access to health and well-being. Evidence from BC's Adolescent Health Survey demonstrates that healthy school environments and the presence of policies related to sexual orientation and gender identity are strongly correlated with better health outcomes for sexual minority students<sup>1</sup>. Schools, where youth spend the majority of their time, are a crucial setting for addressing health inequities, which are demonstrated to greatly impact trans\* youth. YouthCO supports the work of the BC Safer Schools Coalition and their goal of creating safe school environments for all.<sup>2</sup>

The revised policy is an important step forward in building inclusive, safe, and healthy schools and school communities. It is critical that VSB implement policy and regulations that seek to fully include trans\* students and that specifically aim to decrease transphobia; it is imperative that there is intentional effort to address gender identity, gender expression, and anti-transphobia to create more inclusive spaces for trans\* youth.

YouthCO strongly encourages the Vancouver School Board to approve and embrace the proposed policy revisions to ensure that trans\* students are protected, supported, and included.

Sincerely,



Jesse Brown, Executive Director  
on behalf of YouthCO HIV and Hep C Society of BC

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014 from: [http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/From\\_Hastings\\_Street\\_To\\_Haida\\_Gwaii.pdf](http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/From_Hastings_Street_To_Haida_Gwaii.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014 from: <http://bcsaferschools.com/>