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Sent: Tuesday, November 2, 2021 11:25 AM
To: Gasser, Ray <gasserra@msu.edu>; Gore, Venceslaus <vgore@msu.edu>
Subject: Proposal for Trans Rights and Policy on Campus

Good Morning,

I hope you are both well and enjoying this beautiful fall weather on campus. I am writing to you on behalf of the campus-wide student caucus, transcend. This caucus advocates for the rights and specific social, educational, and cultural needs of transgender students living on campus at MSU.

Since 2013, we have been fighting for improvement of gender-inclusive bathrooms and bathroom policies. There are four major action items that need to be addressed concerning this issue. Firstly, bathroom signs on campus still include graphics of people on them. Secondly, additional gender-inclusive bathrooms need to be constructed throughout all of campus, but particularly in the International Center and Erickson Hall. Thirdly, a policy requiring gender-inclusive bathrooms on each floor in all new construction projects must be created. Finally, official protections must be put in place for transgender students that allows them to use the bathrooms they feel most comfortable in. These action items are all imperative to the safety, protection, comfort, and mental well-being of transgender students at MSU.

Before addressing each action item individually, I would like to present to you some notable statistics. In 2016, the National Center for Transgender Equality published the largest survey of transgender people ever conducted to date. This survey had some startling statistics regarding public restrooms and transgender people in the United States. 59% avoided public restrooms in the last year because they feared confrontations at work, school, or other public places; 12% report that they had been harassed, attacked, or sexually assaulted in the bathroom in the last year [2015]; 31% had avoided eating or drinking so they did not need to use the restroom in the last year [2015]; 24% report that someone told them they were using the wrong restroom or questioned their presence in the bathroom in the last year [2015]; 9% report being denied access to the appropriate bathroom in the last year [2015]; and 8% reported having a kidney or urinary tract infection, or another kidney-related medical issue, from avoiding restrooms in the past year [2015]. It is evident in these statistics that advocacy for gender-inclusive restrooms for transgender students at MSU is imperative for their mental, social, education, physical, and overall well-being. Given the global pandemic and other stressors of being on campus - for many students, for the first time - as a transgender person, addressing this issue would relieve a portion of the struggles transgender students are currently facing on campus.

As of right now, a majority of bathroom signage on campus has graphics of people. Although this may not seem like a pertinent issue - after all, it's a graphic of a "woman" on the "women's bathroom." However, not all people who use the women's bathroom are women, and not everyone that uses the men's bathroom is a man. Not all binary transgender people (transgender women and men) are comfortable using the bathroom that aligns with their gender. There are many reasons behind this - avoiding harassment, avoiding awkward and even dangerous confrontations, or avoiding general discomfort. Ideally, students would be able to use whichever bathroom feels most comfortable to them, but out of regards for personal safety and limited gender-inclusive restrooms, many transgender students are not afforded that right. As a transgender student, walking into any bathroom is anxiety-inducing at best, and the inclusion of graphics of men and women is an added insult to an already difficult choice that has to be made. Given the unfortunate current situation concerning gender-inclusive bathrooms on campus, removing graphics of people from all bathroom signage would be a step in the right direction to alleviate some of the stress being felt.

There are 82 accessible gender-inclusive restrooms and 30 non-accessible gender inclusive restrooms on campus. This is equal to, roughly, one gender-inclusive restroom per building. Given that gender-inclusive bathrooms are single-stall, this is restrictive in several ways. Given the often-elusive and distant

location of gender-inclusive restrooms, transgender students have to travel significantly further than cisgender students just to use the bathroom. The impacts of this are many. Not only do students miss more information if they are in a situation where they are leaving class to go to the bathroom, or risk being late, they are also put into a situation where they feel explicitly unwelcome on campus. Why else, after all, would the simple endeavor of using the bathroom become a momentous task that their cisgender peers simply do not have to undertake? Considering this, there are not enough gender-inclusive restrooms on campus. Action must be taken to build more.

Although I do not have first-hand experience in regards to gender-inclusive bathrooms in new buildings, as far as I understand this guideline has been held to since it was introduced to administration. However, to ensure that this is followed for the foreseeable future, it's necessary that an official policy be put in place. This policy must explicitly outline that for any future buildings and infrastructure put on campus, a gender-inclusive bathroom must be present on every floor.

Similarly, a policy must be enacted that protects the rights of transgender students to use the bathroom they are most comfortable using. We use this wording because, although "congruent with their gender" is still somewhat applicable, the fact is not all transgender people are men or women - nor is it always safe for binary trans people to use the bathroom that alligns with their gender identity. Therefore, we use the "comfortable using" wording as to include those situations.

As previously mentioned, transgender people are at a great disadvantage when it comes to having accessible, inclusive restrooms. No person should have to fear confrontation, harassment, or violence when trying to, simply, use the bathroom. No person should have to put their physical well-being at risk to use a bathroom. No person should have to become ill (in regards to kidney diseases as previously mentioned) because of the lack of safety when using bathrooms. This is a reality, however, for transgender students. A way to provide protection and mitigate some of these issues would be to put in an official policy.

This policy would entail a statement from the university. It would condemn any discrimination, harassment, confrontation, or otherwise negative behavior on the basis of a student's gender identity from other students or staff. It would reinforce the basic rights of transgender students on campus and make it clear that it is unacceptable anywhere on Michigan State University's campus to discriminate against them. Secondly, bathroom access would be added *explicitly* to the MSU Anti-Discrimination Policy. Thirdly, a policy would be enacted that outlines consequences in regards to violating the previous statement. Many transgender students do not report harassment due to not only the fear of retaliation, but also because of a fear of poor support from administration. If a student is reported by another student for transphobic discrimination, they should face specific consequences.

First, they should be required to repeat their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training. Secondly, they should have to enroll and participate in the Gender and Sexuality Campus Center's Quest I and II training. It should be made clear that the actions by the student are a direct violation of the MSU Anti-Discrimination Policy. Repeat violations should be considered as severe as any other repeat violation of the Anti-Discrimination Policy on campus.

Every issue mentioned is prevalent in regards to discrimination against and the rights of transgender students at MSU. Each directly put transgender students at risk or disadvantage them.

Now, it may be asked why we are pushing for this directly rather than going through places such as the student government. In the past eight years, ASMSU has passed one bill on the matter of gender-inclusive bathrooms. Bill 50-11 was resolved, "That the Associated Students of Michigan State University advocate for the creation of gender-neutral, or "family" restrooms across Michigan State's campus." This statement is meaningless and void of action. Given inaction from an organization meant to advocate on behalf of students and their collective rights, further action must be taken on our end. Therefore, we *strongly*

implore you to consider the issues raised and the impact they've had and will continue to have on transgender students at MSU.

I would like to work with you both directly to take further action on this, which is why I have contacted you. In order to make these changes happen, we need the support of RHS, and having the support of the both of you would be instrumental in this. Given the inaction from ASMSU, our only option is to work with RHS directly. I hope that I can depend on the support of you both in enacting these necessary changes.

I look forward to hearing from you soon,

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