

From: [Peel, Jackson](#)
To: [Press](#)
Subject: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: House Democrats on Governor DeSantis Signing the "Don't Say Gay" Bill
Date: Monday, March 28, 2022 1:14:59 PM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 28, 2022

CONTACT

Jackson Peel
Communications Director
House Democratic Office
Jackson.Peel@myfloridahouse.gov
850-717-5297

House Democrats on Governor DeSantis Signing the "Don't Say Gay" Bill

Tallahassee, FL – Today, Governor DeSantis signed **HB 1557**, the "Don't Say Gay" bill, into law. Members of the House Democratic Caucus fought hard against this bill during the legislative session, and it drew criticism and condemnation from within Florida classrooms and across the nation.

House Democratic Caucus **Leader Evan Jenne (D- Hollywood)** issued the following statement, "This new law doesn't help a single Floridian pay their rent, put food on the table, or afford health care. It does not create a single new job, protect our waters, or solve our growing insurance crisis.

This is nothing but a political distraction designed to raise one man's profile as he runs for higher office. Unfortunately, this governor is more interested in appealing to Republican presidential primary voters in Utah and Mississippi than he is in showing compassion and leadership to the people of Florida. This bill wasn't necessary, and claims to solve a problem that frankly doesn't exist. The words of the bill sponsors and the Governor's own staff clearly laid out the real purpose: they don't like the LGBTQ community, and don't mind sacrificing their safety to advance their agenda."

Representative Carlos Guillermo Smith (D- Orlando) said, "By signing #DontSayGay into law, DeSantis is attempting to censor and exclude an entire community of people from our public schools for his own political gain. This law doesn't solve any problem that exists. Instead, HB 1557 has been weaponized by the Governor's office to launch a bigoted smear campaign to attack and defame LGBTQ Floridians with baseless accusations of grooming and pedophilia.

HB 1557 does absolutely nothing to prohibit conversations about sex, sexual activity or sex ed with young children, despite its proponents' claims. The bill's intentionally vague language leaves teachers afraid to talk to their students and opens up school districts to costly and frivolous litigation from those seeking to exclude LGBTQ people from any grade level. Even worse, #DontSayGay sends a hateful message to our most vulnerable youth who simply need our support.

The battle against #DontSayGay is far from over. To those LGBTQ youth in Florida and around the world struggling to find support, just know that you are loved exactly the way you are and we'll continue to fight for you every single day because your lives are worth fighting for."

Representative Michele Rayner (D- St. Petersburg) added, "Governor DeSantis failed the people of Florida today by signing the Don't Say Gay bill in spite of the outrage of the entire nation, especially the outrage of the parents, students, and teachers who came to speak in person against this legislation. This is a dark time in Florida and a stain on our State's history all because of one man's desire to fulfill his political ambitions at any cost. The role of our elected public officials should never be to cause so much agony and uncertainty of an already vulnerable group. I want the kids and parents out there who are in fear right now to know that this dark time is temporary and we must not give up in the pursuit of freedom and safety for our LGBTQ families and individuals. This is the time to recommit to the fight for equality and empower our youth to be the stewards of democracy and the representation needed at every level of government."

Representative Tracie Davis (D- Jacksonville) said, "Schools should be safe and enriching places for children to learn and thrive. Sadly, Republican leaders in our state are working tirelessly to erase the lived experiences and history of LGBTQ Floridians to win more votes from their base. These divisive culture war stunts distract us from their failure to address the housing crisis, and workforce shortages, while doing little to provide struggling folks with the permanent, meaningful tax relief they need. In Florida, we should be united in fully funding schools, paying our teachers well, and ensuring our children are supported."

Note: Two members quoted above, Reps. Smith & Rayer, are members of the LGBTQ community.

###