



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Students All Across Wisconsin Take Part in a Day of Silence**

Madison, WI – Get ready for schools in Wisconsin to be a little quieter. On Wednesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, students at middle schools, high schools and college campuses in Wisconsin and all across the nation will participate in a Day of Silence to protest the discrimination, harassment and abuse – in effect the silencing – faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students and their allies in schools.

The Day of Silence, a project of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and the United States Student Association (USSA), is being organized by students in over 75 schools in Wisconsin and will be held during school hours on April 18<sup>th</sup>. Students participating in the event will be silent all day, wearing ribbons and passing out “speaking cards” that read:

“Please understand my reasons for not speaking today. I am participating in the Day of Silence, a national youth movement protesting the silence faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people and their allies in schools. My deliberate silence echoes that silence, which is caused by harassment, prejudice, and discrimination. I believe that ending the silence is the first step toward fighting these injustices. Think about the voices you are not hearing today. What are you going to do to end the silence?”

Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools, a Madison-based nonprofit organization, and the Allies Program, a UW-Madison campus group, are organizing a “Breaking the Silence” rally, scheduled to take place on the afternoon of the 18<sup>th</sup> in downtown Madison. There will be a silent march up State Street at 4:45 PM, starting in Library Mall and ending at the Capitol building. The rally will begin at 5 PM, and will feature short speeches from area middle school, high school and college students.

“Day of Silence is one of the largest student-led actions in the country,” says Tim Michael of Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools, “and it’s especially relevant after last November’s election. Some of the most vocal opposition to the ban on gay marriage came from the youth, and Day of Silence is another great example of just how civically engaged young people can be when they feel passionately about an issue.”

Support for this year's event is strong. A joint proclamation, declaring April 18<sup>th</sup> Day of Silence in Dane County, was signed by Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk and Dane County Board of Supervisors Chair Scott McDonnell. Madison Mayor Dave Cieslewicz signed a similar proclamation in which he urges "all residents to accept the challenge of providing meaningful and significant support that will contribute to the health and well being of all LGBTQ youth in Madison."

GLSEN's 2003 National Climate Survey found that more than four out of five LGBT students report verbal, sexual or physical harassment at school and almost a third report missing at least one day of school in the past month out of fear for their personal safety.

Day of Silence is one way students are making anti-LGBT bullying, harassment and name-calling unacceptable in schools.

Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools is a Madison-based nonprofit organization that envisions educational systems in which all students thrive regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.

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To learn more about Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools, please visit [www.gsaforsafeschools.org](http://www.gsaforsafeschools.org) or contact Timothy Michael by phone at (608) 661-4141 or email at [timmm@gsaforsafeschools.org](mailto:timmm@gsaforsafeschools.org).