



My name is Jack Petocz, I am a 17-year-old gay student activist in Flagler County, Florida. This year, I organized nationwide walkouts in opposition to the discriminatory "Don't Say Gay" bill and stood up to targeted censorship occurring across the state.

At my school's protest against the legislation, more than 500 students gathered to call on Florida lawmakers to stop policing our education for political gain. While I would characterize the rally as a success, we encountered numerous difficulties with administration. As students were entering the protest, the district had staff on-site to confiscate pride flags and other symbols of students' identities. I had personally purchased more than 300 of the flags to distribute and was told they weren't allowed and were merely a "political statement."

I stood up to this behavior, telling students to keep their flags and continue marching on bravely. Immediately following the protest, I was called into my principal's office and was interrogated by staff. I would eventually be told to collect my things and was escorted by administration off of campus. For four days, I was removed from my learning.

When I returned, the administration assured me that no further disciplinary action would be taken. A month later, they broke this verbal agreement and placed a level 3 referral on my record. Now, due to this high level of discipline, I am being prevented from running for senior class president. I am continuing to be punished for standing up for my identity and against widespread hatred. I've emailed administration and the principal numerous times, they're simply ignoring me.

Today, I ask for your support in calling on these administrators to stop silencing queer students fighting for a more inclusive future. Click the link in the thread below to send an email to the superintendent and administrators of Flagler County Public Schools, requesting they take the disciplinary infraction off of my record. We shouldn't be subjected to abuse both in Tallahassee and at-home. This isn't just one story, countless others are experiencing similar intimidation from individuals who are supposed to care for us.

I won't be discouraged by this obvious attempt to silence our voices. We will keep protesting, we will keep speaking, we will keep fighting until no child is subjected to this kind of abuse of power. Queer and trans students are beautiful and loved no matter what the state has to say about it. Florida and beyond is bound to change due to the work and unrelenting spirit of Gen-Z.

Sincerely,

Political Strategy Associate, Gen-Z for Change