MEDIA ADVISORY: October 21, 2026

Community Members and LGBTQ+ Advocates to Rally and Testify Against Proposed Rainbow Symbol Ban at Hastings School Board Meeting

Parents, faith voices, and grassroots leaders will gather today at 4:30 PM outside Hastings Middle School to oppose Policy 505 before the public comment period.

HASTINGS, Minn. — Dozens of local parents, educators, faith leaders, and LGBTQIA2S+ community members organized by Prism Organizing Network will gather today outside Hastings Middle School to show visible support for LGBTQIA2S+ students and staff before attending the Hastings School Board meeting.

Community leaders will testify during the public comment section against proposed Policy 505. The proposal would restrict displays of Pride flags, safe-space stickers, and other symbols of LGBTQIA2S+ support in school facilities. Organizers also warn that the restrictions threaten students' freedom of expression, including their ability to communicate messages of identity, acceptance, and solidarity through buttons, badges, and other personal items. A similar policy has been considered in Detroit Lakes, where an earlier rainbow-symbol ban prompted an ACLU lawsuit.

Event Quick Details

Detail	Information
WHAT	Media availability, supporter gathering, and public comment period regarding Hastings School Board Policy 505.
WHEN	**Today, Wednesday, October 21, 2026*** **4:30 PM CT:** Community gathering, visual display, and media interviews (outside school entry).* **5:00 PM CT:** School Board meeting begins; public comment follows during the meeting (Media Center).
WHERE	**Hastings Middle School (Media Center)** 1000 11th St W, Hastings, MN 55033

Detail	Information
WHO	Community members, local faith leaders, parents, and **leaders from the Prism Organizing Network**.
VISUALS	* Community members gathering with rainbow flags, signs, and "I proudly support LGBTQIA2S+ inclusion" banners prior to entry. * Community members filling the media center in solidarity during public comment. * Local leaders, educators, and clergy delivering public testimony.

Key Context & Issues

- **Threats to Student Well-Being:** Research from The Trevor Project links supportive educators and LGBTQIA2S+ affirming school environments with greater feelings of safety and belonging and better mental health outcomes among LGBTQIA2S+ youth.
- **Legal and Operational Risks:** Proposed Policy 505 raises concerns about students' constitutional free-speech rights and Minnesota's non-discrimination protections. A similar controversy in Detroit Lakes prompted an ACLU of Minnesota lawsuit challenging restrictions on rainbow symbols and other supportive displays. Although the district rescinded its original ban, the legal dispute and debate over replacement policies have continued.
- **Impact on District Operations:** Similar disputes over LGBTQ+ inclusion and school policies in Minnesota have led to documented operational disruptions. In Detroit Lakes, administrators' concerns about enforcing proposed restrictions delayed policy changes. In Worthington, a teacher announced plans to resign amid a dispute over classroom Pride and Puerto Rican flags. In Farmington, a school board meeting ended early amid controversy over an LGBTQ-supportive classroom sign. In Anoka-Hennepin, a 2024 dispute over diversity and equity policies escalated into a budget standoff, prompting preparations for a potential district shutdown before the impasse was resolved.

Media Availability & Contact

Spokespersons and local community members will be available for brief on-site interviews between 4:30 PM and 5:00 PM, and immediately after the public comment period concludes.

Media Contact:

- **Rev. Oby Ballinger** (he/him)
- Co-Executive Director for Organizing, Prism Organizing Network

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About Prism Organizing Network

Prism Organizing Network is a statewide grassroots movement advancing safety, dignity, and freedom for LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans. Through leadership development, regional organizing, and collective action, Prism Organizing equips LGBTQIA2S+ people and allies to shape decisions affecting their communities. Its work connects queer and trans community groups, faith congregations, and other justice movements across Minnesota to challenge harmful policies and strengthen belonging. Regional teams build lasting relationships and local leadership through community gatherings, Pride events, Transgender Day of Visibility activities, and school board voter education. By connecting local action with statewide collaboration, Prism helps communities build the power to create lasting change. Learn more at prismorganizing.org.