

March for LGBTQ youth at Louisiana Capitol

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SLL photos

Baton Rouge, LA – On May 27, almost 300 people gathered at the Louisiana State Capitol to protest the attacks on LGBTQ rights. The demonstrators then marched to Governor John Bel Edwards’ mansion and listened to several speakers. Protests like this are sweeping the nation as states move to pass anti-LGBTQ legislation. Many of the attendees and speakers were students and young people who these reactionary bills directly attack.

Protesters demanded that Edwards, a Democrat, veto all anti-LBGTQ legislation. They condemned bills such as “Don’t Say Gay” (HB 466), which would ban teachers from discussing gender identity and sexuality. Other targets included the “Deadname Bill” (HB 81), banning the use of gender-affirming names and pronouns, and bills that censor LGBTQ-themed books in libraries (SB 7, HB 102, and HB 628).

Before the march began, organizers outlined the necessity for the people to exercise their political power to defend LGBTQ rights. “The Republicans are playing a

numbers game, they think that if they throw enough bills at the wall, then something will stick. But those numbers aren't the ones that matter, the numbers that matter are the people who are out in the streets!" emphasized Serena Sojic-Borne, an organizer with Real Name Campaign.

This method of resistance has already proven successful at defeating these bills. HB 648, which would have banned gender-affirming care for minors, was defeated in the state senate committee. It took a coalition of many grassroots organizations and collective action by LGBTQ people in Louisiana to make this happen.

During the march, chants like "Trans kids are here to stay, GOP, go away!" and "We're here, we're queer, we're fabulous, don't mess with us!" kept protesters lively as they approached the mansion. Outside Governor Edwards's mansion, Blu DiMarco, a student organizer with Loyola Young Democratic Socialists of America, spoke on his experiences as a trans person in the state. "We will not be pushed back into the closet, instead, we will break the door, because we are the children, the parents, the teachers, the past and the future, trans people make this country thrive!" DiMarco said.

Governor Edwards has stated support for LGBTQ youth but has not committed to vetoing any legislation by the Republican-dominated legislature. Last year, he allowed a ban on trans kids playing sports to pass into law.

The diversity of speakers and organizations at the protest goes to show that this is an all-hands-on-deck struggle. The fight for LGBTQ rights, women's rights, and education are increasingly interwoven as the right-wing gains momentum in the United States. Sojic-Borne highlighted the importance of continuing this struggle: "We do this by keeping our eyes on the prize, not just this or that bill, but building a movement," she concluded.

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