

Resolution #69-13

**The Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA)
The Pennsylvania State University**



of the 69th Assembly
February 12, 2020

Be it decided by the Assembly of Elected Delegates,

State College's First Pride
**A letter of support to Centre LGBTQA Support Network in their approval for and
planning of Centre County's first Pride**
(Decided: [Y / N / A])

Nature of the Situation:

Centre LGBTQA Support Network

More than just a charitable nonprofit, Centre LGBTQA Support Network (CLSN) is an invaluable asset to the Centre County community. Their mission “to encourage, recognize, and celebrate efforts to foster an environment of safety, equality, respect, and affirmation for LGBTQA”¹ members and their friends and families is accomplished by bringing together the community through education, advocacy, and activities in the Centre region.² CLSN acts as a greater State College community-oriented compliment to many offices on Penn State’s campus and to the State College Area School District.

Since its inception in 2014, CLSN has offered support groups for youth and parents of the LGBTQA+ children, educational and social programming, and has engaged in local advocacy. These events are open to the public and are frequently attended by members of the Penn State community. Additionally, they have established an annual \$1,000 scholarship to be awarded to a high school student that demonstrates a commitment to tackling LGBTQ issues. The network’s

¹ https://www.facebook.com/pg/centrelgbtqa/about/?ref=page_internal

² <http://centrelgbtqa.squarespace.com/>

1 reach goes beyond serving the LGBTQA community; they also collaborate and develop
2 relationships with many environmental and social justice-oriented organizations in an effort to
3 improve the lives of individuals in our community.
4

5 *Pride Comes to State College*

6 On the night of February 3, the State College Borough Council unanimously supported the CLSN's
7 request to host State College's first-ever Pride festival. While Penn State University hosts its own
8 Pride Parade each year, the borough of State College has never hosted a Pride festival. Co-chair of
9 the CLSN, Susan Marshall, is proud to announce that the first State College Pride festival will
10 provide members of the broader State College community an opportunity to come together and
11 make visible a population that doesn't always have a safe space to celebrate their authentic selves.
12

13 The Pride parade is being developed with key support from the State College borough, Webster's
14 Bookstore & Cafe, and the Penn State Center for Sexual & Gender Diversity and will provide a
15 space for more Queer-affirming activities in the community. Organizers were encouraged by the
16 support for both the Pride flags hung downtown annually and the Altoona Pride parade.
17

18 The event will likely include a Pride parade to occur in Downtown State College, followed by a
19 festival where CLSN hopes to host a festival with music, tabling for community resource
20 organizations, family-friendly events, and an opportunity for people to share personal stories and
21 make short speeches. All will be welcome at the event and there will be an effort to help educate
22 members of the community on LGBTQA issues. In the months and weeks leading up to the Pride
23 festival, there will be a call for community volunteers to help with organizing the event.³
24

25 *The LGBTQA+ Journey for Equity and Inclusion*

26 In 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court decriminalized homosexuality nationwide.⁴ This landmark
27 decision led to the legal recognition of marriage between same-sex couples in another major legal
28 debate in 2015.⁵ Nonetheless, in spite of these legal advancements, LGBTQA+ individuals
29 continue to experience discrimination all across the country. According to a 2017 report by the
30 Harvard T.H. Chan of Public Health, "90% of all LGBTQA+ people believe there is discrimination
31 against gay, lesbian, and bisexual people in America today," and about 51% of these individuals
32 have experienced violence due to their gender or sexuality.⁶
33

34 To highlight a few examples, there are no legal protections for the LGBTQA+ community in the
35 state of Pennsylvania in terms of foster care/adoptions, paid family leave that includes inclusive
36 definitions, and access to private health insurance. Additionally, there is no state-wide ban against
37 conversion therapy (even though State College has passed such a ban).⁷ As 2020 unfolds, the U.S.
38 Supreme Court struggles to determine whether Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 should
39 prohibit discrimination against transgender employees.⁸ The need to continue to advocate for the
40 holistic inclusion of each and every member of the LGBTQA+ is more than evident.
41

41 *Our Commitment*

³ <https://www.centredaily.com/news/local/community/state-college/article239945743.html>

⁴ Lawrence v. Texas, 539 U.S. 558, 123 S. Ct. 2472, 156 L. Ed. 2d 508 (2003)

⁵ Obergefell v. Hodges, 135 S. Ct. 2584, 192 L. Ed. 2d 609 (2015)

⁶ <https://www.npr.org/documents/2017/nov/npr-discrimination-lgbtq-final.pdf>

⁷ http://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/profile_state/PA

1 At the Pennsylvania State University, “we value inclusion as a core strength and an essential
2 element of our public service mission.”⁷ Hence, we were thrilled to find out about the Council’s
3 approval of the very first State College Pride. We believe that, beyond the graduate and
4 professional student population at the Pennsylvania State University, the at-large college
5 community will truly benefit from this event. The celebration of Pride commemorates the uprising
6 of LGBTQA+ rights and recognizes the impact that the community has had on history locally,
7 nationally, and internationally. Moreover, this parade will provide a space to celebrate social and
8 self-acceptance, achievements, legal rights, and, overall, pride.

9
10 Further, in spirit to show our support and utmost commitment to foster diversity and inclusion, we
11 commend the advocacy work of the Centre LGBTQA Support Network. It is our goal to extend
12 the utmost willingness to collaborate in future advocacy efforts. The local community is key to the
13 lives of professional and graduate students and we would value the opportunity to strengthen this
14 connection for such much-needed cause.

15
16 **Recommended Course of Action:**

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18 GPSA continuously strives to promote diversity, inclusion, and equity within and among Penn
19 State’s graduate and professional student population. Supporting the first-ever Pride will be part
20 of our efforts to extend our reach in support of the LGBTQA community beyond the university;
21 our students are, of course, also members of the greater State College community.

22
23 We recommend the following actions:

- 24 ● GPSA adopt this resolution as a statement of support for the first State College Pride.
- 25 ● We recommend GPSA work intentionally to foster a collaborative relationship with Centre
26 LGBTQA Support Network and the greater LGBTQA community.
- 27 ● We also recommend that GPSA maintain and increase their collaborative relationship with
28 the Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity and related student organizations on campus
29 such as Queer and Trans People of Color (QTPOC) and LGBTQA Student Roundtable.
- 30 ● We encourage the Borough Council and Borough leadership to consider additional
31 pathways to support the LGBTQA community in State College.

32
33 GPSA expresses our enthusiastic support for this initiative. This resolution aims to extend the
34 relationship beyond the 69th GPSA Assembly to permanently codify our commitment to the
35 LGBTQA community.

Respectfully submitted,

Claire Kelling
GPSA President

Amanda Burton
Delegate, College of Agricultural Sciences

⁷<http://equity.psu.edu/psu-diversity-statement>

Steven Baksa
Delegate, Intercollegiate Graduate Degree Programs

Santina Cruz
Delegate, Eberly College of Science

Adilson E. González Morales
At-Large Delegate, Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications

Emma Robertson
Delegate, Law School

President _____ Affirm Veto

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The Graduate and Professional Student Association