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## Erosion of Public Education and Student Safety Amidst Ideology-Based Policy

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### Abstract.

Since the 2016 election ideological practices masked as parental rights have been sweeping K-12 schools across the United States. Often these types of legislation manifest as book bans and anti-queer or "Don't Say Gay" policies that limit discussion around LGBTQ+ and prevent schools from supporting queer students while requiring schools to out students to their parents. These policies directly conflict with evidence-based practices on promoting inclusive, welcoming school climates and are related to increased rates of bullying, victimization, truancy, negative mental health outcomes, suicidal ideation, and decreased teacher retention and school climate. All amidst a severe teacher shortage in the United States. This presentation uses 32 exploratory interviews with K-12 educators and school board members across a predominantly rural Midwestern state to gain an understanding of how these policies influence educator practice, teacher retention, school-based mental health systems, school climate, and library information systems. Findings reveal severe dismantling of evidence-based best practices in schools, and spike in desire for educators to leave the field, disintegration of school-based mental health systems, and erosion of school information systems. This research is necessary as there is a dearth of similar research and it is essential for policy makers to understand the implications of these policies.

**Keywords:** ideology v evidence-based practices, K-12 school policy, United States, LGBTQ+