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February 12, 2021

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Six women religious communities and a federation of congregations of women religious have added their support to a statement signed by [bishops supporting LGBTQ youth](#).

In January, "[God Is on Your Side: A Statement from Catholic Bishops on Protecting LGBT Youth](#)" was released on the website of the Tyler Clementi Foundation, a group that fights anti-LGBTQ bullying in schools and faith communities. Ten bishops, an archbishop and a cardinal have signed the statement as of Feb. 12.

The staff at the schools sponsored by the [Ursuline Sisters of Louisville](#), Kentucky, wanted to start an outreach program for LGBTQ students at the high school and asked the sisters if they had a statement in support.

"While we had general statements in support of all life, we did not have a specific statement," Ursuline Sr. Jean Anne Zappa, president of the community, wrote in a statement to Global Sisters Report. "We thought it was important to help those students and wanted to support the staff pastorally."

The congregation's communications director, Kathy Williams, was aware of the "God Is on Your Side" effort, so the sisters crafted a statement in support.

"We respect the intrinsic dignity of all human life, including the lives of LGBT youth, who face many challenges, including bullying, harassment and violence, as well as being at higher risk for suicide," the Ursulines' [statement](#) reads. "As followers of Christ, we are called to welcome and defend those on the margins, especially those whom society rejects. ... LGBT youth are children of God, created by God and loved by God. We stand in solidarity with them."

The [Benedictine Sisters of Chicago](#); the [Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambéry](#); the [Sisters of Charity of Nazareth](#), Kentucky; the [Sisters of Loretto/Loretto Community](#); the [Sisters of Mercy of the Americas](#); and the [U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph](#) have joined the Ursuline Sisters in signing the Tyler Clementi Foundation's statement as of Feb. 12. The [Edmund Rice Christian Brothers](#) North America province leadership team, the [Jesuit Schools Network](#) and the [Paulist Fathers](#) have also signed on.

"Our leadership team has been both amazed and thankful for the outpouring of gratitude from so many, and that several other religious communities have signed on and joined us," Zappa wrote.

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The Catholic leaders who have signed the "God Is on Your Side" statement are:

- Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, New Jersey;
- Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, New Mexico;
- Bishop Steven Biegler of Cheyenne, Wyoming;
- Auxiliary Bishop John Dolan of San Diego;
- Retired Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit;
- Bishop Joseph Kopacz of Jackson, Mississippi;
- Retired Auxiliary Bishop Denis Madden of Baltimore;
- Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego;
- Retired Bishop Ricardo Ramirez of Las Cruces, New Mexico;
- Bishop John Stowe of Lexington, Kentucky;
- Bishop Anthony Taylor of Little Rock, Arkansas;

- Bishop Edward Weisenburger of Tucson, Arizona.

The Tyler Clementi Foundation statement says Christians have a duty to stand up for LGBTQ youth.

"As we see in the Gospels, Jesus Christ taught love, mercy and welcome for all people, especially for those who felt persecuted or marginalized in any way; and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that LGBT people are to be treated with 'respect, compassion and sensitivity,' " the statement says. "All people of goodwill should help, support, and defend LGBT youth; who attempt suicide at much higher rates than their straight counterparts; who are often homeless because of families who reject them; who are rejected, bullied and harassed; and who are the target of violent acts at alarming rates."

The statement also says its signatories "oppose any form of violence, bullying or harassment directed" at LGBT people.

On Jan. 22, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a [statement](#) signed by five different bishops, expressing "concerns" over President Joe Biden's decision to extend existing federal protections against sex discrimination to include LGBTQ people. The five bishops wrote that prohibiting discrimination threatens the religious liberty of those who believe differently because it could lead to "mandates that, for example, erode health care conscience rights or needed and time-honored sex-specific spaces and activities."

The signatories of the Tyler Clementi Foundation statement, however, expressed no such fear.

"Most of all, know that God created you, God loves you and God is on your side," the statement says.