



## Testimony by Wendy Walsh on AB 9, "Seth's Law"

April 13, 2011

Good Afternoon. My name is Wendy Walsh, and I am here today to honor the memory of my son – Seth. I want to thank Assmeblymember Ammiano for his leadership and support for *all* of California's students and young people.

Seth told me he was gay when he was in the sixth grade. He was a wonderful, loving child, and I loved him for who he was. My son's school in Tehachapi, however, did not provide Seth with the support or protection that should be given to all of our children. Anti-gay harassment was a part of Seth's daily life at school. He feared using the rest room or being in the boy's locker room before gym class. My pleas for help and protection for Seth fell on deaf ears at his school. One teacher even called Seth "fruity" in front of an entire class. The vice principal said "remind me next year."

On September 19<sup>th</sup>, Seth could bear no more pain. I found him hanging from a tree in our backyard. He passed away after nine days on life support. A note Seth left upon his death expressed love for his family and close friends, and anger at the school "for bringing you this sorrow."

I can't bring my son back. But the California legislature can make a difference today to protect young people across our state just like Seth who are or are thought to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. I am proud to stand before you today on behalf of my son and so many young people like him to urge the legislature to pass the AB 9, Seth's Law. Schools need to take harassment and bullying seriously when parents or students tell them about it, and when they see it and hear it on the school campus.

Right now, state laws do not give enough guidance on how schools can prevent and address bullying. This law would give California schools specific tools to prevent and address this pervasive problem to create a safe school environment for all students. No mother should ever have to lose their 13-year-old child to intolerance and anti-gay harassment, especially in a place that should be providing them with an education and putting them on a path to a promising future.

I am here in Sacramento to honor Seth. Not one more child should have to go through what my son did. No child should be bullied the way he was. Thank you Assemblymember Ammiano and all the members of the Education Committee for what you are doing to make our schools places where *every student* in California can enjoy an education free of discrimination and harassment because of who they are.