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White House LGBT Conference on Safe Schools and Communities

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"President Obama has made it clear that it only gets better because we make it better."

-Valerie Jarrett, Senior Advisor to the President, at the White House LGBT Conference on Safe Schools and Communities

I'm so excited to be in Arlington, Texas for the White House LGBT Conference on Safe Schools and Communities, where I heard the above quote in one of many inspiring speeches delivered this morning.

The President and the Department of Education have taken critical steps to increase safety for LGBT youth in schools, but there is so much left to do, such as passing the Student Non-Discrimination Act. So far, this conference promises continued commitment.

After Jarrett spoke, Attorney General Eric Holder held up the Anoka-Hennepin consent decree [1] as a "blueprint for sustainable reform." Congratulations again to our friends at the National Center for Lesbian Rights and the Southern Poverty Law Center for that landmark settlement! I was thrilled to see the White House reference such a comprehensive approach to school climate change and administrative responsibility as a model for other districts.

I was also heartened to hear Torey Cummings, of the civil rights division of the Department of Justice, warn against the "gut reaction to push youth out of schools." There has been an encouraging emphasis on alternative approaches to combatting bullying, instead of harmful discipline policies that disproportionately affect LGBT youth, low-income youth, and youth of color.

We're livetweeting from @GSANetwork, so follow us [2] and check out the White House Livestream [3] to keep up with the afternoon sessions!

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Links:
[1] http://nclrights.wordpress.com/2012/03/05/civil-rights-organizations-announce-agreement-to-resolve-anoka-hennepin-school-district-bullying-lawsuits/
[2] http://www.twitter.com/gsanetwork
[3] http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2012/03/20/watch-live-white-house-lgbt-conference-safe-schools-communities