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Today, President Obama announced the launch of "[My Brother's Keeper](#) ^[1]," an initiative to support young men of color and ensure all youth in this country have a chance to succeed.

Hostile school environments and extreme disciplinary policies create a school-to-prison pipeline for youth of color, including gay, bisexual, and transgender young men of color, telling them that their lives are disposable and that simply trying to get an education carries a risk of jail time. LGBT youth make up just 5-7% of the youth population, but represent 15% of those in the juvenile justice system -- the majority of which are youth of color.



All

young people should have the opportunity to graduate and live healthy lives. That is why Gay-Straight Alliance Network prioritizes dismantling the policies and practices that push young people out of school and into the criminal justice system. GSA youth activists are building educational justice coalitions and advocating for bills to limit the use of suspension, expulsion, and zero tolerance policies across the country. GSA Network of California youth leaders have been part of the California Endowment's Alliance for Boys and Men of Color initiative for three years, working to end these policies for GBT young men of color in the state. We are glad that President Obama shares our commitment to young people's futures, and we look forward to learning more about this initiative and how it will improve opportunities for gay, bisexual, transgender and all young men of color.

In the meantime, we encourage Gay-Straight Alliance clubs to advocate for restorative justice practices and other proven solutions in their districts, and push back against punitive disciplinary policies and other practices that disproportionately deny young men of color the opportunity to learn and succeed.

Says Mario Vasquez, the Vice-Chair of GSA Network's Board of Directors and current college student: "I am glad to hear the president's remarks on the My Brother's Keeper initiative. As a young gay man of color, it is significant to hear the President address issues of access and success for my community. The President addressed the importance of keeping youth in our schools and out of prisons, in part by implementing alternative discipline practices, rather than zero tolerance policies. Gay, bisexual, transgender and queer young men of color face the same issues the President talked about, plus additional biases and barriers, and GSA clubs can offer

youth the mentorship and support systems the President called for."
News Article

Source URL: <http://gsanetwork.org/news/statement-young-men-of-color-initiative>

Links

[1] <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/02/27/fact-sheet-opportunity-all-president-obama-launches-my-brother-s-keeper->