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Sep. 23, 2011 ? Dave

September 21st and 22nd marked the second **Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention Summit in Washington D.C.** GSA Network was proud to be one of the partners invited to the summit held by the US Departments of Education, Justice, and Health & Human Services. The group was a mix of student activists and supportive adults?many of whom came to learn from the experiences of youth and experts, like GSA Network, on how they can make it better for young people. The summit kicked off with a speech from **Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius** where she confirmed that the ?federal response to bullying has never been more coordinated.? **Secretary of Education Arne Duncan** also gave a moving speech declaring, ?Enough is enough. It?s time to end the bullying epidemic.? He added that groups like GSAs ?can and do make schools more tolerant places.?

The first day included panels and presentations from ABC Family, Cartoon Network, USA Network, Facebook and Seventeen Magazine which focused on cyber bullying and engaging community partners outside the school to combat bullying and harassment. Later, we were joined by actress **Katie Leclerc**, of ?Switched at Birth?, and actor **Tyler Blackburn**, of ?Pretty Little Liars?, and both spoke about the importance of deleting digital drama and reducing online harassment.

Day two began with a speech from **US Congresswoman Linda Sánchez**, the House of Representatives author of the [Safe Schools Improvement Act](#) ^[1], which is currently being debated by both houses of Congress. This federal anti-bullying bill specifically includes protections for LGBTQ youth who are targeted at schools. Congresswoman Sánchez called for ?actions to create the kind of change we want to see in schools,? alluding to important campaigns like the [Make It Better Project](#) ^[2]. After hearing from Congresswoman Sánchez, we then heard from a panel of parents who had lost their children to suicide after enduring bullying. Their heartbreaking stories reminded everyone in the room of the life or death nature of the problem and the importance of [reaching out for help](#) ^[3] if you?re feeling lost or hopeless.

The summit drew to a close with remarks from the **Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, Tom Perez**

. Mr. Perez reminded us that civil rights movements are about persistence and that President of the United States and his agencies are going to ?use every tool in their arsenal to fight bullying.? He added that the Department of Justice is eager to learn from us on what they can do to end bullying and encouraged anyone with ideas to contact him directly at Tom.Perez@usdoj.gov [4].

Finally, we reviewed the long way we?ve come in the last year, including launching investigations into school districts who do not adequately handle bullying and harassment of LGBTQ youth and other young people. If you feel your school or school district is ignoring bullying at your school, we encourage you to [file a complaint](#) [5] with the Justice Department.

It was a great few days, and speaking as a participant, I want to let the youth activists out there know that the federal government is listening and will not tolerate bullying anymore. **They want to learn from you how to make it better!**

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Links

[1] <http://www.amplifyyourvoice.org/u/Mahayana/2011/3/16/Safe-Schools-Improvement-Act-is-ReIntroduced-with-Bipartisan-Support>

[2] <http://www.MakeltBetterProject.org>

[3] <http://www.TheTrevorProject.org>

[4] <mailto:Tom.Perez@usdoj.gov>

[5] <http://www.justice.gov/crt/complaint/#three>