



OKLAHOMA-BASED AND OTHER LGBTQ AND 2STGNC+ ORGANIZATIONS RELEASE STATEMENT ON MEDICAL EXAMINER REPORT ON DEATH OF NEX BENEDICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tulsa, Oklahoma, Friday, March 15 - Oklahoma-based LGBTQ and 2STGNC+ organizations are responding to the release of a report by the Oklahoma Medical Examiner's Office regarding the death of Nex Benedict. Nex was a 16-year-old of Choctaw heritage who identified as trans masculine and non-binary, and used he/him or they/them pronouns according to loved ones. Nex died the day after being attacked three-on-one in a restroom at Owasso High School in Owasso, Oklahoma last month following the policy in Oklahoma that students use the bathrooms that align with their sex assigned at birth.

Nex had reported to police in the hospital following the attack that they had endured a year of bullying in the school, and that they did not believe the school would do anything to address the bullying. The officer discouraged Nex and their family from reporting the incident.

Statement from the Transgender Advocacy Coalition of Oklahoma:

"We continue to mourn the tragic loss of our community member, Nex Benedict, whose life was cut short by the devastating effects of bullying. Nex was a descendant of the Choctaw Nation and a non-binary high school student who used they/them or he/him pronouns. Nex tragically fell victim to relentless torment, a casualty of a system that failed to protect their rights and dignity.

"The recent Oklahoma Medical Examiner's report stated that Prozac and Benadryl were found in their system and drew the conclusion that Nex's untimely death was a result of suicide. Our organizations continue to call for an independent autopsy and review of all the available medical information in Nex's case.

"We also call upon elected representatives and policymakers at every level to take immediate and decisive action to repeal the policies, such as Oklahoma SB 613 and SB 615, that enabled this hostile environment. Further, we urge the legislature to not pass any legislation, including HB 3217, HB 3120, HB 3214, HB 3219, HB 3022, SB 1677, and SB 1530, that would further infringe on the freedoms of Oklahoma 2SLGBTQIA+ citizens.

"It is not enough to mourn the loss of Nex; we must honor their memory by enacting meaningful policy changes that ensure the safety and well-being of all students. No one should have to endure the pain and suffering of bullying. It is incumbent upon all of us to stand together and demand change now.

"We know that bullying disproportionately affects anyone who is seen as "other". Therefore, we call on individuals and organizations to seek education and training on the systemic issues that intensify hostile environments in schools and across the state which continue to traumatize and make spaces unsafe, including: colonialism, racism, queerphobia, transphobia, and more.

"As we come together to mourn the loss of Nex, let us stand united in our resolve to create a world where every individual is valued, respected, and free to live authentically without fear of persecution or harm. May the memory of Nex's life, cut terribly short, serve as a catalyst for positive change, inspiring us to work tirelessly towards a future where tragedies like this are no longer a reality and Oklahoma is safe for all of its citizens." #JusticeForNex #MMIR #Choctaw #Trans #Nonbinary #2SLGBTQIA #Bullying #OKLeg

Statement from Oklahomans for Equality:

"Oklahomans for Equality calls for all Oklahomans to continue to build strong communities of inclusion, acceptance, and safety of 2SLGBTQ+ Oklahomans, especially our most vulnerable, our children and youth. This call includes doing everything necessary to elect officials who will dismantle systems and rhetoric of hate and oppression from our state's capital."

Statement from Kylan L. Durant, Oklahoma Pride Alliance President:

"We are once again heartbroken at the unfolding story of Nex. This story is tragic and we grieve with you. We yearn for a world in which this is not a reality for our young people. Nex should still be alive. We will continue to call for our leaders, schools, and community to do better for our youth, especially our indigenous and 2STNC+ youth. As this will circulate once again in the media, please remember to prioritize your well-being at a time like this, and remember that it's okay to step back when necessary. Recognizing your needs and seeking support is a sign of strength, not weakness. #ProtectTransKids"

Statement from Christopher Sederburg, Leader of the Transgender Action Committee at Rainbow Youth Project USA:

"We are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of Nex Benedict and the countless others across the country who have suffered from bullying. Every student deserves to feel safe and supported

in their learning environment. It is unacceptable that Secretary Ryan Walters and his actions have enabled an atmosphere of hostility and fear for 2SLGBT+ students in Oklahoma."

Reporter Resources:

- Please see [ReportingOnSuicide.org](https://reportingonsuicide.org) for critical recommendations for responsible media coverage.

Support:

- If you are in a life-threatening situation, please dial 911.
- If you are in crisis, please dial 988 or contact Rainbow Youth Project directly at +1 (317) 643-4888.
- For non-emergency support, you can connect the following organizations in Oklahoma:
 - CREOKS: <https://creoks.org>
 - PFLAG: <https://pflag.org/>
 - Freedom Oklahoma: <https://www.freedomoklahoma.org/>

For background on Nex's life and story, visit GLAAD's [guidance for reporters](#) and Freedom Oklahoma's [webpage](#) and resources [dedicated to Nex's memory](#).

About Trans Advocacy Coalition of Oklahoma:

Trans Advocacy Coalition of Oklahoma is an egalitarian, non-hierarchical, independent grassroots organization that aims to support and empower everyone in Oklahoma whose gender identity, expression, or experience differs from the societal norm.

About Oklahomans for Equality:

Oklahomans for Equality seeks equal rights for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and families through intersectional advocacy, education, programs, alliances, and the operation of the Dennis R. Neill Equality Center. Serving the community and allies since 1980, Oklahomans for Equality is home to a diverse, vibrant, and engaged community, knowledgeable staff, and dedicated volunteers.

About Oklahoma Pride Alliance:

We believe that everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, deserves to live in a world where they are accepted and celebrated for who they are. Our mission at Oklahoma Pride Alliance is to foster a sense of community and belonging for Oklahoma's 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. We provide resources, programming, and events that aim to educate and empower the community. Together, we can create a more inclusive and accepting society.

About Rainbow Youth Project USA:

At Rainbow Youth Project USA, we see the value in everyone. We want to be a catalyst for positive change, and despite being a new, spontaneous, and organic Organization, we pledge to be continuously driven by the same ideas we initially founded our Organization upon: Support. Empowerment. Progress.