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This College Just Made History for Transgender Students

A community college in California announced this week that it will be the first school in the United States to offer a scholarship specifically for transgender students.

Staff, faculty, and students at MiraCosta College in Oceanside started raising money for the Trans Pride Scholarship in 2015, seeking to address barriers to education for transgender students. The scholarship is good for \$1,000 a year.

Transgender students face more discrimination than straight, lesbian, or gay students.

A 2009 report by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network found that most transgender students attended schools with "hostile school climates," with 90 percent of the students surveyed hearing negative remarks about gender expression at school; a third of the students heard negative remarks from staff. Rates of psychiatric disorders, substance abuse, and suicide attempts are all higher for transgender people than for the general population.

"While members of the LGBT community experience marginalization, this marginalization is experienced most greatly by members of the transgender and gender nonconforming communities," MiraCosta's Gender Sexuality Alliance Faculty Co-Adviser Steven Deineh said in a statement. "Scholarships and visible support for members of this at-risk community are critical right now as states like Indiana and North Carolina and highly visible government officials are disavowing the civil rights of transgender people under the auspices of religious freedom."

North Carolina and Indiana both have a troubled history with respect to LGBT rights.

North Carolina lawmakers tried to ban same-sex marriage. Again.

On April 11, North Carolina lawmakers filed House Bill 780 "Uphold Historical Marriage Act," which aimed to bring back the state's prior ban on same-sex marriage. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of same-sex marriage in 2015. However, the Republican leader of the state house, Tim Moore, said the bill will not get a hearing because he has constitutional concerns.

Last year, North Carolina lawmakers received huge backlash for the controversial legislation, HB2, that barred transgender people from using bathrooms that correspond to their gender identity. It also prevented cities in the state from passing their own transgender protections.

Indiana lawmakers passed another religious freedom bill.

Indiana passed a bill on Tuesday ostensibly aimed at protecting "religious freedoms" in public schools. The bill says students cannot be discriminated against based on their religion.

Vice President Mike Pence, previously governor of Indiana, signed a religious freedom law in 2015 that advocates said allowed businesses to discriminate against LGBT customers on religious grounds. The latest version of the bill includes language barring discrimination against LGBT people.