

"Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give voice to those who are silent: the many youth in our high schools and middle schools who are afraid to speak of their place in our society because they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or questioning their sexual identity.

"Today marks the 10th annual National Day of Silence in which we celebrate the diversity in our society, but acknowledge a deep seated intolerance towards that diversity.

"In my district several efforts are being made to turn that intolerance into tolerance. The Watsonville YWCA has added a group called Latinas y Lesbianas y Aliadas. It is one of the very few programs in the nation dedicated to reaching out to the Spanish speaking community who has not historically had access to such support systems. I hope this becomes a national movement.

"I am also proud to represent several Shoreline Middle School 8th graders who have been nominated for the Queer Youth Leadership Awards. These brave students have worked to end homophobia and discrimination, making their school and community a safer place for people of all walks of life.

"These students are joined by their families, but they should not be alone in their efforts.

"For this reason, I have joined my colleague, Rep. Eliot Engel, in cosponsoring H.Con.Res. 86 which memorializes the National Day of Silence and encourages each state or local jurisdiction to adopt laws to prohibit discrimination and harassment against persons of alternative sexual orientation or gender identity."