Equality Florida Fellowship Program

To Whom It May Concern:

I am interested in participating in the Field & Advocacy Fellowship Program. My name is Aziza Davis, and I am a graduating senior at Chiles High School in Tallahassee, Florida. My passion for education has pushed me to excel in school in peer-advocacy, summer classes, and Dual Enrollment courses. Initially, the competitive environment my peers encouraged and a strong dedication to avoid failure drove me to get the best out of my education. However, as my high school experience progressed, I noticed how exclusive my environment was and how little anyone was willing to address it. Our Gay-Straight-Alliance club existed only in name, and students were jovially called slurs on a casual basis. My education started to have more purpose than pursuing my success but expanded to ensure the success of others –, specifically, racial and sexual minorities.

Now that I am out of school, I am looking for ways to expand my skill base and apply what I’ve learned toward efforts that can directly affect the community. During my high school career, I have a gap semester between my last day of high school and the beginning of my freshman year of college, and I want to use this time to gain hands-on experience in any way possible in the field of advocacy. The most attractive aspect of being a part of Equality Florida is its sub-focus on education through corporate diversity training and preventing hurtful student-to-student interaction. During my time as a Senate Page, I witnessed Florida Representatives argue against diversity training in workplaces for the sake of inconveniencing the work environment. The bill died that session, and it became clear that the government still has a long way to go to make our society safe and accessible for everyone. In the meantime, I will pursue other paths that can make those underprioritized in government feel more secure in their day-to-day lives, a privilege I’m finding is being increasingly abused and taken advantage of.

To combat this, for example, at Equality Florida, you all are addressing Governor DeSantis’s pitfalls at including gay and trans youth under his administration’s protection in school environments– the very same environment I have departed from this year. The public schools in Leon County have taken on a similar issue, rallying protection for HB 241, or the Parents’ Bill of Rights, that went into effect this past July. HB 241 has been cited in support of banning mask mandates, LGBTQ+ counseling, and sex education, and I realize its impact and media attention will have adverse effects on those younger than me. Moreover, mirroring my own experiences in high school, many do not know and will not know that there are people out there representing their interests due to the opacity of the opposition’s success. For many gay youths, this is indescribably disheartening, and knowing that organizations like Equality Florida are out there can make a big difference. I now have the opportunity to be a part of that difference, and any help I can contribute would be an incredible honor.

I look forward to discussing my suitability for this program with you. Feel free to contact me at 850-251-3169 or [azizakdavis@gmail.com](mailto:azizakdavis@gmail.com). I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Aziza Davis