



PHOTOS BY JENNIFER BROWN/CITY OF JERSEY CITY

## Playground opens at Exchange Place

**JERSEY CITY** Mayor Steve Fulop along with representatives from the city council and board members of the Exchange Place Alliance cut the ribbon on a new playground next to the Owen Grundy Pier yesterday. From left: Martin Schmid, deputy director of Exchange Place Alliance; Elizabeth Cain, director of EAE; Lanndon Cain; David Elkouby, board member; Mayor Fulop; Mayor for the Day Amaya Udeshi, 6, who attends Stevens Cooperative School; her mother, Nehal Udeshi; Mike DeMarco; Anthony Romano; Councilman



James Solomon; and Council President Joyce Watterman. The innovative playground is fully accessible for children with disabilities and is made of environmentally-friendly

materials that can be recycled when no longer in use. The playground features a unique piece of equipment that has the capacity for 60 children to play on it at one time.

# NJ Attorney General takes school district to court over policy to out LGBTQ students

BY TINA KELLEY  
NJ ADVANCE MEDIA

The New Jersey Attorney General filed a civil rights complaint Wednesday against the Hanover Township Board of Education and public schools, challenging a policy passed Tuesday requiring school staff to notify parents of their children's gender identity and sexual orientation.

Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin joined Sundee Iyer, Director of the Division on Civil Rights, in filing an emergency motion in Superior Court to prevent the new policy from going into effect.

"We will always stand up for the LGBTQ+ community here in New Jersey and look forward to presenting our arguments in court in this matter," Platkin said. "We are extremely proud of the contributions LGBTQ+ students make to our classrooms and our communities, and we remain committed to protecting them from discrimination in our schools."

The complaint argues that the policy violates the state's Law Against Discrimination because it discriminates based on sexual orientation or gender identity or expression, requiring parental notification for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer students but not for their peers. The policy would also put such students' safety and mental health at risk and goes against guidance from the New Jersey Department of Education, which protects students' confidentiality and privacy.

According to the Attorney General's office, the new policy calls for all school staff to "immediately, fully and accurately inform a

student's parent(s) whenever such staff member is made aware of, directly or indirectly, any facts or circumstances that may have a material impact on the student's physical and/or mental health, safety and/or social/emotional well-being," including, among other things, a student's "sexuality," "sexual orientation," "transitioning," and "gender identity or expression."

In a statement, the board said the policy did not target students based on any protected status, but requires staff to notify administrators and parents when they become aware of anything that may impact a student's well-being.

It listed a range of 30 issues, including peer, academic, or athletic pressure, school performance, anxiety, depression, fatigue, isolationism, preoccupation with anti-social music, sexual activity, sexuality, sexual orientation, transitioning, gender identity or expression, and familial/cultural challenges.

Under the Law Against Discrimination, sexual orientation and gender identity or expression are protected statuses.

The statement concluded: "The Hanover Township Board of Education believes that parents need to be fully informed of all material issues that could impact their children so that they – as parents – can provide the proper care and support for their children."

The state is not challenging the policy's requirements for parental notification related to "substance use," "alcohol use," "firearms," or "unlawful activity."

The K-8 district serves about 1,300 students in Whippany and Cedar Knolls in Morris County.

### WEATHER TODAY

69°/57°

Partly sunny and breezy. For the full forecast, see Page 26.



Art	13	Dr. Roach	12
Best Bets	15	Festivals	15
Business	12	Music	13, 14
Classifieds	19	Obituaries	16
Comics	22-23	Sports	24-25
Crossword	20	Television	27
Dear Abby	12	Today in History	27
Dear Annie	20	Wonderword	24

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