



School Violence, Bullying and Harassment

Every student deserves a safe place to learn. Support House bill 1366

House Bill 1366, the School Violence Prevention Act, introduced by Representatives Glazier (D), Fisher (D), Justice (R), and Stiller (R), along with 43 bi-partisan co-sponsors, passed the House 73-46. The Senate then passed a stripped, ineffective version of the bill. The House must reject these changes so a strong final version of the bill with enumerated protections can be adopted.

Students have a right to a sound basic education, but too often bullying and harassment interferes with that right.

Bullying that goes unaddressed also contributes to more severe violence, like school shootings. Studies suggest that a history of bullying was a factor in most school shootings in recent years.

Because they feel unsafe, victimized youth are pushed out of schools and into high-risk behavior. These youth are more likely to skip school, drop out, engage in substance abuse, or worse.

Every student—regardless of whether they are Christian, Muslim, black, white, brown, gay, straight, girl, boy, fat, skinny, short, tall, rich, or poor—deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. Physical appearance, sexual orientation, and gender identity are the three most frequent reasons for bullying and harassment in schools, yet these types of bullying are often overlooked by school personnel.

This bill protects ALL students from bullying, and its inclusion of enumerated categories will provide clear direction to teachers, administrators, and students about the scope of the law. Teachers want clear policies that will give them the backing they need to address problems in the classroom and on the playground.

While harassment of any kind is unacceptable and should be dealt with quickly, firmly and with appropriate consequences and remedies, certain groups of people have suffered systematic institutional prejudice, discrimination and, as a result, are at a disproportionate risk of being the target of harassment and violence.

Strong laws against bullying and harassment are a growing trend. Just last March, Iowa became the tenth state to adopt an anti-bullying law including sexual orientation.

The Numbers

5794 incidents of bullying and harassment were reported in NC Schools in the last school year, according to DPI. Many more went unreported.

8 out of 10 NC students reported that people at their school were harassed because of looks or body size.*

7 out of 10 NC students reported that people at their school were harassed because they were thought to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual.*

3 out of 4 NC students reported that people at their school were harassed because of the way they expressed their gender.*

Students from schools with enumerated policies report that others are less often harassed in their school because of their physical appearance (**36% vs. 52%**) and sexual orientation (**32% vs. 43%**).**

Students from schools with enumerated policies are more likely to feel very safe at school (**54% vs. 36%**) and one-third less likely to skip a class because they felt uncomfortable or unsafe (**5% vs. 16%**).**

* Harris Interactive. "From Teasing to Torment: School Climate in North Carolina," 2006

** Harris Interactive, "From Teasing to Torment," (Nationwide) 2005