

P. MICHAEL STURLA, CHAIRMAN  
414 MAIN CAPITOL BUILDING  
P O. BOX 202096  
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120-2096  
PHONE (717) 787-3555  
FAX (717) 705-1923



HOUSE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE  
[www.pahouse.com/PolicyCommittee](http://www.pahouse.com/PolicyCommittee)  
Policy@pahouse.net  
Twitter: @RepMikeSturla

**House of Representatives**  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HARRISBURG

**HOUSE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE HEARING**  
**Topic: House Bill 2009**  
**First United Methodist Church of Germantown – Philadelphia, PA**  
**January 31, 2018**

**AGENDA**

- 2:00 p.m. Welcome and Opening Remarks
- 2:10 p.m. Panel One:
- Amanda Rice, Counselor, and Gesu Justice League Students, Gesu School
  - Pamela Pendleton and Mark Smith, Advocates
  - Melany Nelson, Executive Director, Northwest Victims Service
  - Elder Rob Harrison, Executive Director, Stenton Family Manor
- 2:35 p.m. *Questions from Committee Members*
- 2:50 p.m. Panel Two:
- Victoria Greene, Executive Director, Every Murder is Real
  - Dr. Claudio Cerullo, Founder and CEO, Teach Anti-Bullying, Inc.
  - Anthony Washington, Police Inspector, Philadelphia Police Department
  - Gaylen Conley, Director of Police Operations, School District of Philadelphia
- 3:15 p.m. *Questions from Committee Members*
- 3:30 p.m. Panel Three:
- Sederia Brown, Founder and CEO, Know 2 Bullying Coalition
  - Jeff Templeton, Founder and Executive Director, Staying Positive Equals Amazing Kids (S.P.E.A.K)
  - DeAngelo Harris and Drew Johnson, Paralegals, Philadelphia District Attorney's Office
  - Roi Ligon, Jr., Safe Schools Advocate, Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency
- 3:55 p.m. *Questions from Committee Members*
- 4:10 p.m. Closing Remarks

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## House Co-Sponsorship Memoranda

### House of Representatives Session of 2017 - 2018 Regular Session

#### MEMORANDUM

**Posted:** December 7, 2017 12:42 PM  
**From:** [Representative Stephen Kinsey](#) and [Rep. Donna Bullock](#)  
**To:** All House members  
**Subject:** Requiring Bullying Education for All Grade Levels

In the near future, we will introduce legislation that would require bullying education to be taught in schools across all grade levels.

As we see on almost a daily basis, bullying can have a severe impact on the mental health of children. For instance, over the last several weeks there have been several media reports of suicides attributed to bullying over social media platforms, including a report of a 10 year old child who ended her life because of cyberbullying.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention released the following statistics in its 2015 biannual national study of Pennsylvania high school students:

- 19.9% of students were bullied on school property in the last year.
- 14.3% of students experienced cyberbullying in the last year.
- 5% of students were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property in the last year.
- 21.7% of students were in a physical fight on school property one or more times in the last year.
- 7.6% of students did not go to school for at least one day because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school on at least one day during the 30 days before the survey.

Although some school districts have made great strides in adopting bullying prevention policies, there is nothing to address bullying at its root cause. Accordingly, an age-appropriate bullying prevention and interventions program, as a curricular requirement across all grade levels, will enable the Commonwealth to move closer to eliminating bullying as a public health threat.

Please join us in co-sponsoring this legislation.

 Introduced as [HB2009](#)

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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE BILL

No. 2009 Session of  
2018

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INTRODUCED BY KINSEY, BULLOCK, SOLOMON, DEAN, CALTAGIRONE,  
DRISCOLL, J. HARRIS, SCHWEYER, DONATUCCI, BRADFORD, WARREN,  
D. COSTA, DeLUCA, ROEBUCK, READSHAW AND ROZZI,  
JANUARY 11, 2018

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, JANUARY 11, 2018

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AN ACT

1 Amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), entitled "An  
2 act relating to the public school system, including certain  
3 provisions applicable as well to private and parochial  
4 schools; amending, revising, consolidating and changing the  
5 laws relating thereto," in terms and courses of study,  
6 providing for bullying prevention education.

7 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
8 hereby enacts as follows:

9 Section 1. The act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known  
10 as the Public School Code of 1949, is amended by adding a  
11 section to read:

12 Section 1528. Bullying Prevention Education.--(a)  
13 Notwithstanding the provisions of section 1303.1-A, beginning  
14 with the 2018-2019 school year, each school entity shall:

15 (1) Develop an age-appropriate bullying prevention education  
16 program and incorporate the program into the school entity's  
17 existing curriculum for students in kindergarten through grade  
18 twelve. In developing the program, the school entity may use the  
19 model curriculum developed by the department under subsection

1 (b) (1).

2 (2) Include training in bullying prevention in the  
3 professional development plan submitted by the school entity to  
4 the secretary for approval under section 1205.1. Training under  
5 this paragraph may be used to satisfy a professional educator's  
6 continuing professional education requirement under section  
7 1205.2. A school entity may use the materials made available by  
8 the department under subsection (b) (2) to conduct the training.

9 (b) The department, in consultation with at least one  
10 organization addressing bullying prevention, shall:

11 (1) Develop a model bullying prevention education  
12 curriculum, which may include materials already publicly  
13 available, and make the curriculum available to school entities  
14 and, upon request, to nonpublic schools.

15 (2) Compile, develop and post on the department's publicly  
16 accessible Internet website recommended guidelines and  
17 educational materials for the training provided for under  
18 subsection (a) (2), which may include materials already publicly  
19 available.

20 (c) As used in this section, the following words and phrases  
21 shall have the meanings given to them in this subsection unless  
22 the context clearly indicates otherwise:

23 "Bullying." As defined in section 1303.1-A.

24 "Department." The Department of Education of the  
25 Commonwealth.

26 "Nonpublic school." A nonprofit school, other than a school  
27 entity, wherein a resident of this Commonwealth may legally  
28 fulfill the compulsory school attendance requirements of this  
29 act and that meets the requirements of Title VI of the Civil  
30 Rights Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-352, 78 Stat. 241).

1 "Professional educator." As defined in section 1205.2(o).  
2 "School entity." A school district, joint school district,  
3 charter school, regional charter school, cyber charter school,  
4 intermediate unit or area vocational-technical school.  
5 "Secretary." The Secretary of Education of the Commonwealth.  
6 Section 2. This act shall take effect in 60 days.

## Bullying Policy Hearing January 31, 2018

### Testimony:

My name is Sederia Brown. I'm 28 years old and the mother of two amazing boys. I'm the CEO/Founder of the KnowBullying Coalition which brings together people from all walks of life to help end bullying and the violence associated with it. I'm a survivor of many attempts of suicide so I speak from personal experience.

I grow up right here in Mt. Airy where I attended A.B.Day, Houston Elementary and later Bodine High School of International Affairs in Northern Liberties.

I was a lovable, fun and always smiling kid but I grew up in an environment that would often silenced and isolated me. I would often take the long way home when walking from school because I didn't know what type of day it would be when I got there. My dad and step mom worked hard but there was never much talking, hugging or interest in what was going on with me. Instead there was yelling, cursing and a lot of verbal abuse. We didn't have much money and so I often went to school with my hair not done and I often would recycle through the same clothes. This didn't make me very popular in elementary or high school. I was a sweet kid always looking for acceptance and approval from family and friends. So because I wasn't receiving any at home I tried so hard to get kids at school to like me, this sometimes meant I couldn't be myself. Kids would befriend me and then abandoned me, act like I didn't exist! They would talk about me behind my back or whisper to each other when I walked by. So here I was now 13 years old and never truly having any friends, a home that was cold and distant and no one who cared. I truly hated my life and everyone around me. That lovable, smiling kid was broken... I slowly begin sneaking my fathers alcohol daily after school, it numb the pain. Until one day that wasn't enough and I decided to take the whole bottle of Tylenol, well I guess you can see that didn't work. That was my first but not my last attempt at suicide. At the age 16 I was now drinking before and after school. I got pregnant at 17 because "he" was the first person to show interest in "SEDERIA!" I was forced by my family to terminate the pregnancy, which pushed me to my breaking point. I was two weeks out from my start into college on a partial scholarship to Penn State Abington campus. I attended college for a month and then I dropped out. By 18 I had my first son and by 20 years of age I was a full blown alcoholic. I got sober at 20 and been sober ever since!

I share all of this to say that we all sit here not knowing what kids truly endure from home to school daily. A lot of us couldn't handle the things kids are enduring at this very moment. Bullying comes in many different forms, it's bigger than just pushing and shoving. This legislation being past will be the start of kids feeling like they have a voice or even a safe place to talk about the things that keep them from being the best person they can be. If only someone said to me "I'm Here!" This is why I excited to say that I will be publishing my first book this year called I'm Here, which is 3 short stories that kids and adults of all ages will be able to relate too, speaking out on many forms of bullying. Also please support Know Bullying as we prepare for our first round table this Spring which will give the community an opportunity to come up with an action plan so that our kids are protected and adults are informed.

You can follow us on IG @knowbullyingco or Facebook at KnowBullying Coalition

Thanks for letting me share



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION ON CRIME AND DELINQUENCY

**Pennsylvania House Democratic Policy Committee**

HB No. 2009

January 31, 2018

The Office of Safe Schools Advocate (OSSA), is a state office that operates under the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. State law mandates that a Safe Schools Advocate be appointed for all School Districts of the first class. Through my office, I advocate for victims of school violence, victims who are often marginalized and without a voice. My office receives school district incident reports daily, identifying and reaching out to victims. We then advocate for these victims by helping them resolve issues by navigating the systems of key stakeholders. It is through this lens that I am able to discuss the prevalence of bullying behavior.

My role as Safe Schools Advocate provides a unique victim centered perspective of daily school district incidents. Perhaps the most important realization is that the term “victim” can easily be applied to both the target and offender. The culture of bullying begins before the bell rings on Monday morning, before a child’s first class. It begins with an attitude that is dictated by a student’s environment. Young people are often subjected to scenes of violence in their homes and communities before they even get to school. Compounding that harsh reality is the inundation of extreme violence in the media including access to 24/7 mainstream news, social media platforms and websites such as [www.worldstarhiphop.com](http://www.worldstarhiphop.com). This exposure to violence desensitizes an increasing population of youth who face growing social perils in their community

and come to school often traumatized by their own life experience. The pervasiveness of these influences only helps to perpetuate a vast culture of violence in which bullying behaviors are normalized and sometimes celebrated.

Pennsylvania defines bullying as an intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act, or a series of acts:

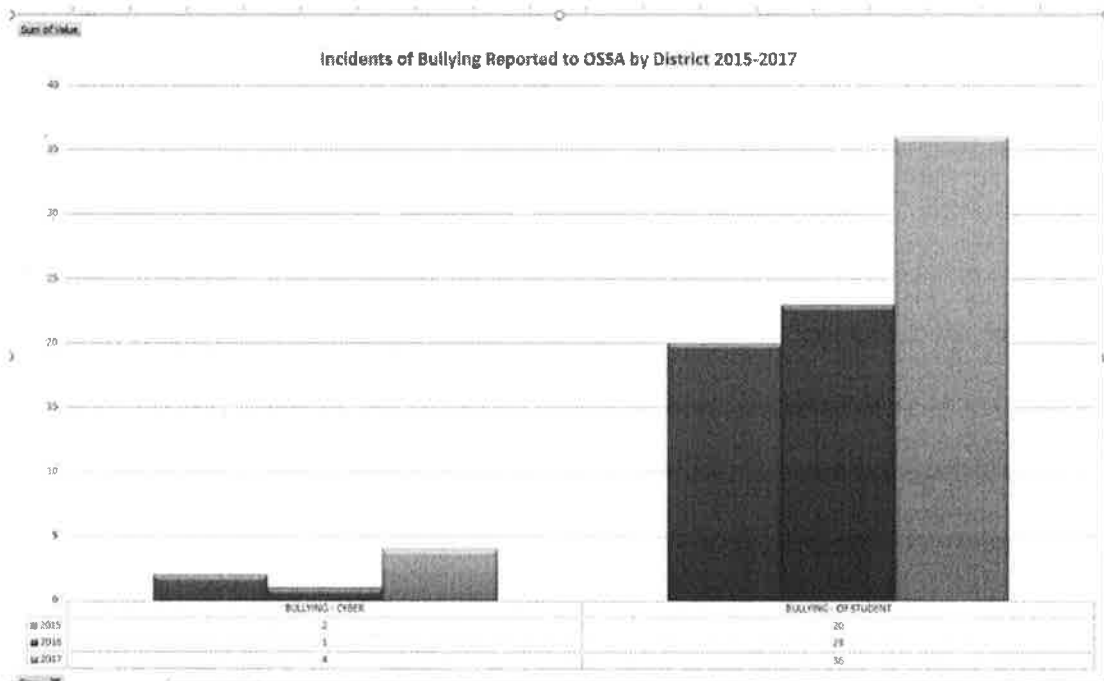
- (1) directed at another student or students;
- (2) which occurs in a school setting;
- (3) that is severe, persistent or pervasive; and
- (4) that has the effect of doing any of the following:
  - (i) substantially interfering with a student's education;
  - (ii) creating a threatening environment; or
  - (iii) substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school;

In contrast, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines bullying as “any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated; bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm.” The latter definition is more indicative of the types of bullying behavior that we see most commonly at OSSA. In this context, bullying behavior is much more pervasive than we realize.

The graph below illustrates the increase in reported incidents of bullying between school years 2015-2017, reflecting an 82% increase. Although this marks a significant increase, the raw



numbers are still relatively low, 22 and 40 incidents for a school district with approximately 160,000 students. This is due to how the school district defines bullying, and very inconsistent reporting practices by schools. An incident is not classified bullying unless the term bullying is specifically used at the time of reporting, and thus many acts of aggression and violence that are the result or culmination of a pattern of bullying behavior may not be reported as such if the school is unaware of the pattern and history.



When reviewing violent incidents, our office has observed that victims sometimes become offenders and offenders become victims during a student's school experience. This observation underscores the importance of adequately addressing the needs of all parties involved in an incident of violence or bullying. If we fail to identify the signs or risk factors that predicate bullying behaviors on either side, the consequences can be devastating.

Last year, as I read through an incident involving a student who assaulted a teacher in the classroom, I wondered what would make a young person strike out in such a violent manner. I

began to investigate the history of the young person, and learned that the middle schooler suffered from a history of being chronically bullied and assaulted at school and had a history of attempting suicide dating back elementary school.

Although suicide is not a natural response to bullying, research indicates that bullying can add to feelings of isolation, rejection, depression and anxiety, which can contribute to suicidal behavior. Most youth who die by suicide have these same risk factors in common.

- According to Philadelphia High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2015) 10% of students who took the survey reported being electronically bullied and 14 % percent reported being bullied on school property.
- From 2015-2017 OSSA recorded an 82% increase of reported bullying in school.

What we have learned is that hurt people, hurt people. In many scenarios, I find that youth are acting from a state of experiential blindness, a premise that states that the brain constructs emotion based on our experiences. When considering the desensitized nature of many bullying behaviors exhibited by the youth, there seems to be an absence of empathy. Consequently, we must find ways to increase the emotional intelligence of young people beginning at an early age. They must be given the tools that will empower them to make sound decisions, grounded in a new set of norms – a framework that demonstrates the adverse impacts of bullying while promoting critical thinking, so that consequences can become a normal part of the decision-making process.

An attitude must be widely adopted among the youth that says it is no longer “cool” or “normal”, to behave in a manner that harms another human being. This can be done by instilling principles of self-care and care for our peers. There are programs that exist to help empower youth with the necessary tools to identify their emotions, make sense of them and then respond appropriately. Although funding has been cut over the last several years, Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency still provides very competitive dollars annually, for evidence-based prevention programs such as, Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and the Positive Action program. Both of these programs work to diminish risk factors associated with dysfunctional behavior such as antisocial/aggressive behavior, while increasing positive factors such as clear standards for behavior and problem-solving skills.

The legislature has mandated that schools develop bullying policies reflecting zero tolerance for the behavior of the aggressor, but has not required policies for the protection and restoration of the victim. Schools’ tendency is to be oriented towards addressing the behavior of the offender and protecting that student’s due process rights, while the needs of the victim fall by the wayside. The OSSA strongly advocates that policies need to be mandated that also address victims’ needs regarding their safety concerns and mental health. As a community, we must remain vigilant at increasing resources and developing strategies that will promote a culture of peace, free from bullying.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roi A. Ligon, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Roi A. Ligon, Jr  
Safe Schools Advocate