



Mark Desetti
Senate Education Committee
Senate Bill 410
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Madame Chair, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Senate Bill 410.

Over the past several years a variety of bills addressing bullying have been debated in the statehouse. Some we have supported while we have opposed others. We were happy to see the State Board of Education put together a bullying task force to find solutions.

We believe this bill represents a very positive and very powerful step forward.

- The bill requires the adoption of bullying prevention and response policies and outlines the critical elements of those plans. This would result in substantially similar policies state-wide.
- The bill requires school districts to clearly identify personnel responsible for taking and handling reports of bullying or complaints.
- There are education requirements for staff and students.
- There are specific requirements for the distribution of the policies including upon enrollment, in school handbooks, and in teacher training materials.

We also believe the reporting requirements, while extensive, are needed. The number of incidents and how those incidents were resolved will help everyone understand the extent of the problem and how we can effectively manage the problem.

We appreciate the continued effort to ensure that these policies are linked prominently on school district and school websites. No one should have to search for these important resources.

The one problem with this bill is that it does not include private schools. We believe that since private schools are able to access state money through the tuition tax credit scholarship program that it is important for everyone to be able to compare those schools to public schools on an “apples to apples” basis. While private schools accredited by the State Board of Education report academic data, under this bill they are under no obligation to report or address bullying behavior. We would suggest that the committee add, at the very least, SBOE accredited private schools or any school that accepts students on scholarship under the tuition tax credit program.