

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6112

As of February 3, 2014

Title: An act relating to requiring classroom instruction regarding harassment, intimidation, and bullying prevention policies and procedures.

Brief Description: Requiring classroom instruction regarding harassment, intimidation, and bullying prevention policies and procedures.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Rolfes, Litzow, Cleveland, Mullet, Dammeier, Hasegawa, Kohl-Welles, Ranker, Conway and Frockt.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/03/14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Katherine Taylor (786-7434)

Background: According to statute, the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) was created out of a public necessity for the coordination of programs and procedures pertaining to policymaking and to control and management among the school districts of the state.

There are 295 school districts in the state of Washington.

Currently harassment, intimidation, or bullying is defined in statute as any intentional electronic, written, verbal, or physical act, including but not limited to one shown to be motivated by a certain characteristic or other distinguishing characteristics, when the intentional electronic, written, verbal, or physical act:

- physically harms a student or damages the student's property;
- has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education;
- is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment; or
- has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

Nothing in this section requires the affected student to actually possess a characteristic that is a basis for the harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill: WSSDA must update its model policy prohibiting acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying that are conducted via electronic means, also known as cyberbullying. WSSDA must also identify strategies for students to prevent cyberbullying.

Both the most up-to-date model policy and cyberbullying prevention strategies must be made available in all school districts' student handbooks. WSSDA must update sample materials for school districts to disseminate, which must also include information on responsible and safe internet use.

WSSDA must submit the model policy and sample materials, along with a recommendation for local adoption, to the Governor and the Legislature and must post the model policy and sample materials on its website by January 1, 2015. Each school district board of directors must update its own policy by August 1, 2015.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: CON: Cyberbullying is a problem but there are policies and procedures to deal with this in schools. What schools need is school resource officers when issues pour over from the community.

OTHER: We believe we could update the model policy with very little fiscal impact. However, the bill asks WSSDA to do things that they do not already do and that will be costly. This work is already being done. The anti-bullying advisory group should update materials. It would be odd to put this policy in a handbook. A summary of the policy would be better. We could post the updated model policy on our website at little cost. We support this bill. We want more education around this issue. We want school districts to have clear guidance. We want to balance cyberbullying issues with first amendment and privacy rights. Student liberty organizations should be included in the bill.

Persons Testifying: CON: Jerry Bender, Assn. of WA School Principals.

OTHER: Marie Sullivan, WSSDA; Chris Kaasa, American Civil Liberties Union of WA.