



Legislation Text

File #: 12-0075R, **Version:** 0

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Spector

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
**Funding for State Agencies to Implement the Use of Multidisciplinary Teams to Address Bullying,
Harassment, and Intimidation Among Students**

FOR the purpose of encouraging the General Assembly to provide the necessary resources to appropriate agencies to implement the use of multidisciplinary teams to address bullying harassment, and intimidation among students.

WHEREAS, Addressing the problem of bullying, harassment, and intimidation must be a shared responsibility among all of the agencies throughout the community that work with young people; and

WHEREAS, The Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005 mandates that the Maryland State Department of Education require county boards of education to report incidents of bullying, harassment, and intimidation against students attending a public school; and

WHEREAS, Baltimore City has not been immune to tragedies suffered by families in which cyberbullying has been a contributing factor; and

WHEREAS, According to the Maryland State Department of Education, a total of 4,678 incidents of bullying, harassment, and intimidation in schools were reported for the 2010-2011 school year, representing a state-wide increase of 860 reported incidents from the 2009-2010 school year and a state-wide increase of 2,992 reported incidents from the 2008-2009 school year;
and

WHEREAS, The Maryland State Department of Education indicates that the extent of bullying, harassment, and intimidation in Maryland public schools may likely be underreported.

WHEREAS, Although school systems, including the Baltimore City Public School System, have addressed continuously the problems of bullying, harassment, and intimidation through the requirements of the federal Safe Schools Act and by providing preventive measures, student education, and professional development, these problems cannot be addressed successfully by school systems alone; and

WHEREAS, According to the Maryland State Department of Education, victims of bullying, harassment, and intimidation and offenders both show higher rates of school absenteeism; and

WHEREAS, The Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2010 Report, produced by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), in the U.S. Department of Education, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), in the U.S. Department of Justice, showed that during the 2007-2008 school year, 25% of the responding public schools reported that Bullying was a daily or weekly problem and that bullying and harassment are a problem in Maryland schools; and

WHEREAS, The non-profit organization, WiredSafety, reports that 85% to 95% of 44,000 middle school students surveyed reported that they had been bullied online at least once but only 5% said they would tell their parents; and

WHEREAS, Anne Townsend, chief academic officer and president of the Baltimore-based Mariposa Child Success Programs, said children and teens don't have the coping skills to put bullying into perspective, but they can learn to do so with the help of parents and teachers; and

WHEREAS, In rapidly increasing numbers, students use social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Tumblr to connect with friends, but some students use these sites, often anonymously, to disparage classmates, sometimes with serious consequences; and

WHEREAS, According to the Pew Research Center, 95% of all teens ages 12-17 are now online, 80% of those online teens are users of social media sites, and 88% of social media-using teens have witnessed other people being mean or cruel on social network sites; and

WHEREAS, A 2010 report from the Cyberbullying Research Center indicates that cyberbullying and traditional bullying may increase the likelihood of suicide or suicidal thoughts; and

WHEREAS, Schools, parents, and students are struggling to address and contain the growing cyberbullying problem, which may happen during the school day on student-owned devices as well as on school computers and also off-premises, after-hours, but affecting other students and the school environment; and

WHEREAS, The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, in *Kowalski v. Berkeley County Schools*, 652 F.3rd 565 (2011), affirmed disciplinary action taken against a student responsible for cyberbullying, finding that the action did not violate the First Amendment, and the student's behavior risked interference with school discipline and the educational mission; and

WHEREAS, The use of multidisciplinary teams has proven to be an effective method of providing and coordinating services to students in other areas, such as under § 5-706 of the Family Law Article of the Maryland Annotated Code; and

WHEREAS, Schools lack sufficient resources to address adequately the problem of bullying, harassment, and intimidation, particularly with the proliferation and use of social media by students.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Baltimore City Council urges the Maryland General Assembly, during the 2013 session, to:

- (1) provide the necessary resources to school systems and appropriate agencies who work with young people to allow them to establish multidisciplinary teams in each jurisdiction, to include but not be limited to school

personnel, representatives from the local police department, the appropriate local mental health agency, and the local State's Attorney, to address bullying, harassment, and intimidation;

(2) promote the use of multidisciplinary teams to handle, investigate, and address reports of bullying, harassment, intimidation, and retaliation, whether in person or online, by encouraging school systems to enter into written agreements with the participating agencies in the multidisciplinary teams to specify standard operating procedures for the investigation and resolution of bullying, harassment, and intimidation complaints, including a timeline for investigation and resolution; and

(3) ensure that the multidisciplinary teams receive the necessary training on an ongoing basis to help bolster bullying-prevention efforts, to support the students who are victimized, and to provide guidance and remediation to the perpetrators.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the chairperson of each jurisdiction's delegation to the Maryland General Assembly for distribution to every member of the General Assembly, and to the Mayor's Legislative Liason to the Baltimore City Council.

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