



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: President Young

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Investigative Hearing - Are Our Children in Danger from Bullying in Baltimore City Public Schools?

FOR the purpose of requesting the CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools, the President of the Baltimore Teachers Union, and the President of the Baltimore City Public School Administrators and Supervisors Association to address the City Council on the prevalence of bullying in some public schools; the magnitude of the problem; and the measures being taken to address the current problem and to prevent an increase in the number and severity of the incidents of bullying throughout the system.

Recitals

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines bullying as "aggressive behavior that is intentional and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Typically, it is repeated over time. A child who is being bullied has a hard time defending himself or herself. Bullying can take many forms, such as hitting or punching (physical bullying); teasing or name-calling (verbal bullying); intimidation using gestures or social exclusion (nonverbal bullying or emotional bullying); and sending insulting messages by e-mail (cyberbullying)."

Studies show that between 15-25% of U.S. students are bullied with some frequency, while 15-20% report that they bully others with some frequency. Boys are more likely than girls to bully others. Verbal bullying is the most frequent form experienced by both boys and girls. Boys are more likely to be physically bullied by their peers, and girls are more likely to bully each other using social exclusion. The use of derogatory speculation about sexual orientation is so common that many parents do not think of telling their children that it could be hurtful.

The National Education Association reports the consequences of bullying include: interference with student engagement and learning in school, depression, loneliness, anxiousness, low self-esteem, sickness, and thoughts of suicide, fear of going to school using the bathroom, and riding on the school bus. Research shows that the those who engage in bullying also have issues. Bullying may be a sign of other serious antisocial or violent behavior; those who frequently bully are more likely to get into frequent fights, be injured, drink alcohol, smoke, be truant, drop out, and carry a weapon.

Bullying also has a negative impact on other students at school who are bystanders to bullying, as it creates a

climate of fear and disrespect in schools and has a negative impact on student learning. Bullying has been identified as a major concern by schools across the nation, and research indicates that children with disabilities or special needs may be at a higher risk of being bullied than other children.

Bullying in Schools, a publication of the U.S. Department of Justice, reports that “bullying is widespread and perhaps the most under-reported safety problem in American school campuses. Contrary to popular belief, bullying occurs more often at school than on the way to and from there. Bullying is often mistakenly viewed as a narrow range of antisocial behavior confined to elementary school recess yards. In the United States, awareness of the problem is growing, especially with reports that, in two-thirds of the recent school shootings (for which the shooter was still alive to report), the attackers had previously been bullied.”

Maryland’s Model Policy to Address Bullying, Harassment ,or Intimidation, Maryland State Department of Education, February 24, 2009, reports that the Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey determined there were 118,834 suspensions/expulsions from school in Maryland’s 24 public school systems during the 2007-2008 school year. Of these, 1257 were for bullying, 1,103 were for harassment, and 1,009 were for sexual harassment, representing a total of 3,360 disciplinary actions for these categories.

Reports of the increase in number and severity of bullying incidents are cause for growing alarm by parents and students of Baltimore’s public schools. This year began in early February with reports of the sentencing of a 16-year old to 50 years in prison (all but 25 suspended) for the killing of another student in the stairwell of Lemmel Middle School, in 2008. In April, it was reported that 3 students were suspended for bullying a third-grade student with cerebral palsy at Gilmore Elementary. After months of verbal abuse and physical attacks, the child attempted suicide by attempting to jump from a window at the school.

As of the end of April, the Office of Student Support reportedly received 105 bullying complaints district-wide so far this year, up from 79 at the same time last year - an increase attributed to staff training sessions and increased awareness. This increase or any bullying in the Baltimore City Public School system is unacceptable. Our children are already at an educational disadvantage and should not have to overcome unnecessary roadblocks in their quest for a quality education.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools, the President of the Baltimore Teachers Union, and the President of the Baltimore City Public School Administrators and Supervisors Association are requested to address the City Council on the prevalence of bullying in some public schools; the magnitude of the problem; and the measures being taken to address the current problem and to prevent an increase in the number and severity of the incidents of bullying throughout the system.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor; the CEO, Baltimore Public Schools; the President, Baltimore Teachers Union; the President, Baltimore City Public School Administrators and Supervisors Association; the Principal, Gilmore Elementary; the Principal, Lemmel Middle School; the President and Members of Baltimore City PTA’s; and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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