

**Senate, No. 2323, printed as amended**

[Senate, March 11, 2010 – ~~Text of the Senate Bill relative to bullying in schools, being the text of Senate, No. 2313, printed as amended,~~]

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

IN THE YEAR OF TWO THOUSAND AND TEN

**AN ACT RELATIVE TO BULLYING IN SCHOOLS**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled,*

*And by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1           **SECTION 1.** The third paragraph of section 1D of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as  
2 appearing in the 2008 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the fourth sentence  
3 and inserting in place thereof the following sentence:- The standards may provide for  
4 instruction in the issues of nutrition, physical education, AIDS education, violence prevention,  
5 including teen dating violence, bullying prevention, conflict resolution and drug, alcohol and  
6 tobacco abuse prevention.

7           **SECTION 2.** The first paragraph of section 37H of chapter 71 of the General Laws, as  
8 so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the third sentence the following sentence:-

9 The policies shall also prohibit bullying as defined in section 37O and shall include the bullying  
10 prevention and intervention plan required by section 37O.

11 **SECTION 3.** The third paragraph of said section 37H of said chapter 71, as so  
12 appearing, is amended by inserting after the first sentence the following sentence:- The student  
13 handbook shall include an age-appropriate summary of the student-related sections of the  
14 bullying prevention and intervention plan required by section 37O.

15 **SECTION 4.** Said chapter 71 is hereby further amended by inserting after section 37N  
16 the following section:-

17 Section 37O. (a) As used in this section, the following words shall have the following  
18 meanings unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

19 “Bullying”, the severe or repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or  
20 electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at  
21 another student that has the effect of: (i) causing physical or emotional harm to the other student  
22 or damage to the other student’s property; (ii) placing the other student in reasonable fear of  
23 harm to himself or of damage to his property; (iii) creating a hostile environment at school for  
24 the other student; (iv) infringing on the rights of the other student at school; or (v) materially  
25 and substantially disrupting the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

26 “Cyber-bullying”, bullying through the use of technology or any electronic means. The  
27 use of bullying in this section shall include cyber-bullying.

28 “Hostile environment”, a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to  
29 be permeated with intimidation, ridicule or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter  
30 the conditions of the student’s education and create an abusive school environment.

31 “Perpetrator”, the student who engages in bullying or retaliation.

32 “School grounds”, property on which a school building or facility is located or property  
33 that is owned, leased or used by a school district, commonwealth charter school or non-public  
34 school for a school-sponsored activity, function, program, instruction or training.

35 “Victim”, a student against whom bullying or retaliation has been perpetrated.

36 (b) Bullying is prohibited on school grounds, property immediately adjacent to school  
37 grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off  
38 school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by  
39 a district or school, or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or  
40 used by a school district, commonwealth charter school or non-public school.

41 Bullying is also prohibited both (i) at a location, activity, function or program that is not  
42 school-related and (ii) through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned,  
43 leased or used by a district or school, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for  
44 the victim, infringes on the rights of the victim at school, or materially and substantially disrupts  
45 the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

46 Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, who provides information during an  
47 investigation of bullying, or who is a witness to or has reliable information about bullying is  
48 prohibited.

49 (c) Each school district, commonwealth charter school and non-public school shall  
50 provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade that is incorporated  
51 into the curriculum of the district or school. The curriculum shall be evidence-based.

52 (d) Each school district, commonwealth charter school and non-public school shall  
53 develop and update a bullying prevention and intervention plan in consultation with teachers,  
54 school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community  
55 representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents and guardians. The  
56 consultation shall at a minimum include notice and a public comment period. The bullying  
57 prevention and intervention plan shall be updated at least biennially.

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58 Each bullying prevention and intervention plan at a minimum shall: (i) include  
59 descriptions of and statements prohibiting bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation; (ii) establish  
60 clear procedures for students, staff, parents, guardians, and others to report bullying or  
61 retaliation; (iii) include a provision that reports of bullying or retaliation may be made  
62 anonymously; provided, however, that no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student  
63 solely on the basis of an anonymous report; (iv) establish clear procedures for promptly  
64 responding to and investigating reports of bullying or retaliation; (v) identify the range of  
65 disciplinary actions that may be taken against a perpetrator for bullying or retaliation; (vi)  
66 establish clear procedures for restoring a sense of safety for a victim and assessing that student's  
67 needs for protection; (vii) establish strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a person  
68 who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or is witness to  
69 or has reliable information about an act of bullying; (viii) establish procedures consistent with  
70 state and federal law for promptly notifying the parents or guardians of a victim and a  
71 perpetrator; provided, however, that the parents or guardians of a victim shall also be notified of  
72 the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying; and provided further that said  
73 procedures must provide for immediate notification to the local law enforcement agency where  
74 criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator; (ix) include a provision that a student

75 who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action; and  
76 (x) include a strategy for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for perpetrators  
77 and victims and for appropriate family members of said students.

78 A school district, commonwealth charter school or a non-public school may establish  
79 separate discrimination or harassment policies that include categories of students. Nothing in  
80 this section shall prevent a school district, commonwealth charter school or non-public school  
81 from remediating any discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally  
82 protected category under local, state or federal law.

83 The bullying prevention and intervention plan may include ongoing professional  
84 development to build the skills of all members of school staff, including but not limited to  
85 educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, and paraprofessionals, to  
86 prevent, identify and respond to bullying. The content of such professional development shall  
87 include, but not be limited to: (i) developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying  
88 incidents; (ii) developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to  
89 stop bullying incidents; (iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power  
90 differential that can take place between and among the perpetrator, the victim, and any  
91 witnesses to the bullying; (iv) research findings on bullying, including information about  
92 specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the  
93 school environment; (v) information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying; and (vi)  
94 internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.

95 The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall include provisions for educating  
96 parents and guardians about the bullying prevention curriculum of the district or school; how

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97 parents and guardians can reinforce the curriculum at home and support the district or school  
98 prevention and intervention plan; the dynamics of bullying; and online safety and cyber-  
99 bullying.

100 (e)(1) Each school district, commonwealth charter school and non-public school shall  
101 provide to students and their parents or guardians, in age-appropriate terms and in the languages  
102 which are most predominant among the students, parents and guardians, annual written notice of  
103 the relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan.

104 (2) Each school district, commonwealth charter school and non-public school shall  
105 provide to all school staff annual written notice of the bullying prevention and intervention plan.  
106 The faculty and staff at each school shall be trained annually on the bullying prevention and  
107 intervention plan applicable to the school. Relevant sections of the bullying prevention and  
108 intervention plan shall be included in a district or school employee handbook.

109 (3) The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be posted on the website of each  
110 school district, commonwealth charter school and non-public school.

111 (f) Each school principal or the person who holds a comparable role shall be responsible  
112 for the implementation and oversight of the bullying prevention and intervention plan at his  
113 school.

114 (g) A member of a school staff, including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator,  
115 school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian or paraprofessional, shall immediately report any  
116 instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member has witnessed or become aware of to the  
117 school principal or to the school official identified in the bullying prevention and intervention  
118 plan as responsible for receiving such reports or both. Upon receipt of such a report, the school

119 principal or a designee shall promptly conduct an investigation. If the school principal or a  
120 designee determines that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the school principal or designee  
121 shall (i) notify the local law enforcement agency if the school principal or designee believes that  
122 criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator; (ii) take appropriate disciplinary  
123 action; (iii) notify the parents or guardians of the perpetrator; and (iv) notify the parents or  
124 guardians of the victim, and to the extent consistent with state and federal law, notify them of  
125 the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation.

126 (h) If an incident of bullying or retaliation involves students from more than one school  
127 district, commonwealth charter school or non-public school, the district or school first informed  
128 of the bullying or retaliation shall promptly notify the appropriate administrator of other district  
129 or school so that both may take appropriate action; provided however that the notification shall  
130 be in compliance with 20 U.S.C. section 1232g.

131 (i) Nothing in this section shall supersede or replace existing rights or remedies under  
132 any other general or special law, nor shall this section create a private right of action.

133 (j) The department of elementary and secondary education, after consultation with the  
134 department of public health, the department of mental health, the attorney general and experts  
135 on bullying, shall (i) publish a model bullying prevention and intervention plan for school  
136 districts, commonwealth charter schools, and non-public schools to consider when creating their  
137 own plans and (ii) compile a list of bullying prevention and intervention resources, evidence-  
138 based curricula, best practices and academic-based research that shall be made available for use  
139 by schools. These resources may include, but shall not be limited to, print, audio, video or  
140 digital media; subscription-based online services; and on-site or technology-enabled  
141 professional development and training sessions. The department of elementary and secondary

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142 education shall biennially update the model bullying prevention and intervention plan and the  
143 list of these resources, curricula, best practices and research and shall ensure that they are posted  
144 on its website.

145 **Section 4A:** The sixth paragraph of section 3 of chapter 71B of the General Laws, as appearing  
146 in the 2008 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the third sentence the  
147 following sentence:-

148 “Whenever the evaluation indicates that a child has a developmental or mental disability  
149 that requires an Individualized Education Program, this program shall address the skills and  
150 proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment or teasing.”

151 **SECTION 5.** Section 3 of said chapter 71B of the General Laws, as appearing in the  
152 2008 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the word “proficiencies”, in line  
153 154, the following words:- ;the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to  
154 bullying, harassment or teasing.

155 **SECTION 5A.** Section 43 of chapter 265 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2008  
156 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out subsection (a) and inserting in place thereof  
157 the following subsection:-

158 (a) Whoever (1) willfully and maliciously engages in a knowing pattern of conduct or series of  
159 acts over a period of time directed at a specific person which seriously alarms or annoys that  
160 person and would cause a reasonable person to suffer substantial emotional distress, and (2)  
161 makes a threat with the intent to place the person in imminent fear of death or bodily injury,  
162 shall be guilty of the crime of stalking and shall be punished by imprisonment in the state prison  
163 for not more than 5 years or by a fine of not more than \$1,000, or imprisonment in the house of  
164 correction for not more than 2 and one-half years or both. Such conduct, acts or threats

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166 described in this subsection shall include, but not be limited to, conduct, acts or threats  
167 conducted by mail or by use of a telephonic or telecommunication device or electronic  
168 communication device including, but not limited to, any device that transfers signs, signals,  
169 writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a  
170 wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo-electronic or photo-optical system, including, but not  
171 limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile  
172 communications.

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173 **SECTION 5B.** Section 43A of said chapter 265, as so appearing, is hereby amended by  
174 striking out paragraph (a) and inserting in place thereof the following paragraph:-

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175 (a) Whoever willfully and maliciously engages in a knowing pattern of conduct or series of acts  
176 over a period of time directed at a specific person, which seriously alarms that person and would  
177 cause a reasonable person to suffer substantial emotional distress, shall be guilty of the crime of  
178 criminal harassment and shall be punished by imprisonment in a house of correction for not  
179 more than 2 and one-half years or by a fine of not more than \$1,000, or by both such fine and  
180 imprisonment. Such conduct or acts described in this paragraph shall include, but not be limited  
181 to, conduct or acts conducted by mail or by use of a telephonic or telecommunication device or  
182 electronic communication device including, but not limited to, any device that transfers signs,  
183 signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in  
184 part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo-electronic or photo-optical system, including, but  
185 not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile  
186 communications.

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187 **SECTION 5C.** Chapter 269 of the General Laws is hereby amended by striking out  
188 section 14A and inserting in place thereof the following section:-

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193 Section 14A. Whoever telephones another person or contacts another person by electronic  
194 communication, or causes a person to be telephoned or contacted by electronic communication,  
195 repeatedly, for the sole purpose of harassing, annoying or molesting the person or the person's  
196 family, whether or not conversation ensues, or whoever telephones or contacts a person  
197 repeatedly by electronic communication and uses indecent or obscene language to the person,  
198 shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$500 or by imprisonment for not more than 3  
199 months, or both.

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200 **SECTION 6.** School districts, commonwealth charter schools, and non-public schools  
201 shall have a bullying prevention and intervention plan in compliance with this act and  
202 incorporate the plan into the district code of conduct required by section 37H of chapter 71 of  
203 the General Laws and shall file the plan with the department of elementary and secondary  
204 education not later than December 31, 2010.

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205 **SECTION 7.** The department of elementary and secondary education shall publish  
206 guidelines for the implementation of social and emotional learning curricula in kindergarten  
207 through grade 12 not later than June 30, 2011. For purposes of this section, social and  
208 emotional learning shall mean the processes through which children acquire the knowledge,  
209 attitudes, and skills they need to recognize and manage their emotions, demonstrate caring and  
210 concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle  
211 challenging social situations constructively.

212 **SECTION 8.** The department of elementary and secondary education shall periodically  
213 review school district programs, activities and services to determine whether the school boards  
214 are in compliance with this act.

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216 **SECTION 9.** There shall be a special commission for the purpose of making an  
217 investigation and study relative to bullying and cyber-bullying. The commission shall consist  
218 of 7 members: 1 of whom shall be the attorney general, or a designee, who shall chair the  
219 commission; 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Massachusetts District Attorneys  
220 Association; 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police  
221 Association; 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association; 1  
222 of whom shall be a representative of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees; 1 of  
223 whom shall be a representative of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents;  
224 and 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Massachusetts Association of Secondary School  
225 Administrators. The commission shall review criminal laws to determine if they need to be  
226 amended in order to address bullying and cyber-bullying; provided further that the commission  
227 shall also investigate parental responsibility and liability for bullying and cyber-bullying. The  
228 commission shall also investigate and study the efficacy of including in the general laws  
229 specific categories or methods of bullying, specific classes of individuals for whom anti-  
230 bullying polices should be in place, as well as the efficacy of putting in place a mandated report  
231 system for bullying similar to the system currently established in section 51A of chapter 119 of  
232 the General Laws. The commission shall report to the general court the results of its  
233 investigation and study and its recommendations, if any, together with drafts of legislation  
234 necessary to carry out such recommendations, by filing the same with the clerks of the senate  
235 and the house of representatives who shall forward the same to the chairs of the joint committee  
236 on education, the chairs of the joint committee on the judiciary, the chairs of the joint committee  
237 on public safety and homeland security, the chairs of the joint committee on children and

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238 families and the chairs of the house and senate committees on ways and means not later than  
239 January 1, 2011.

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