

2010 -- S 2045

LC00176

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2010

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS

Introduced By: Senators Tassoni, McBurney, and Doyle

Date Introduced: January 13, 2010

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 16-21-26 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-21 entitled "Health  
2 and Safety of Pupils" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **16-21-26. Student discipline codes.** -- (a) As used in this section:

4 (1) "At school" means in a classroom, elsewhere on or immediately adjacent to school  
5 premises, on a school bus or other school-related vehicle, at an official school bus stop, or at any  
6 school-sponsored activity or event whether or not it is held on school premises.

7 (2) "Harassment, intimidation or bullying" means an intentional written, electronic,  
8 verbal or physical act or threat of a physical act that, under the totality of circumstances:

9 (i) A reasonable person should know will have the effect of: physically harming a  
10 student, damaging a student's property, placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to his or her  
11 person, or placing a student in reasonable fear of damage to his or her property; or

12 (ii) Is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive that it creates an intimidating,  
13 threatening or abusive educational environment for a student.

14 (3) "Electronic" communications shall include any verbal, textual or graphic  
15 communication of any kind effected, created or transmitted by the use of any electronic device,  
16 including, but not limited to, a computer, telephone, cellular telephone, text-messaging device  
17 and/or personal data assistance device.

18 (b) The board of a school district of a public school shall adopt a policy prohibiting  
19 harassment, intimidation, or bullying at school. The policy shall specifically prohibit harassment,

1 intimidation and bullying by students at school and address prevention of an education about such  
2 behavior. The policy shall be adopted through a process that includes representation of parents or  
3 guardians, school employees, volunteers, pupils, school administrators and community  
4 representatives.

5 (c) Each school district shall adopt the policy under this section and transmit a copy of  
6 its policy to the commissioner of elementary and secondary education and director of the  
7 department of education by September 1, 2004.

8 (d) To assist school districts and public schools in developing policies for the prevention  
9 of harassment, intimidation or bullying, the department of education shall develop a model policy  
10 applicable to grades K-12. This model policy shall be issued no later than December 1, 2003.

11 (e) A school district shall ensure that notice of the school district's or public school's  
12 policy under this section is included in any publication of the school district or public school  
13 policy that sets forth the comprehensive rules, procedures and standards of conduct for its schools  
14 and in its pupil handbook.

15 (f) A school employee, pupil or volunteer shall not, nor shall those individuals solicit  
16 others with the intent to engage in reprisal, retaliation or false accusation against a victim, witness  
17 or one with reliable information about an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying.

18 (g) A school employee, pupil or volunteer who has witnessed or has reliable information  
19 that a pupil has been subjected to harassment, intimidation or bullying, whether written, verbal or  
20 physical, is encouraged to report the incident to the appropriate school official designated by the  
21 school district's or public school's policy.

22 (h) A school employee who promptly reports an incident of harassment, intimidation or  
23 bullying to the appropriate school official designated by the school district's or public school's  
24 policy, and who makes this report in compliance with the procedures in the policy prohibiting  
25 harassment, intimidation or bullying is not liable for damages arising from any failure to remedy  
26 the reported incident.

27 (i) Public schools and school districts are encouraged to form bullying prevention task  
28 forces, programs and other initiatives involving school staff, pupils, administrators, volunteers,  
29 parents, law enforcement and community members.

30 (j) Each school district or public school shall do all of the following:

31 (1) Provide training on the school district's or public school academy's harassment,  
32 intimidation or bullying policies to school employees and volunteers who have significant contact  
33 with pupils. The training may include promotion of conflict resolution and mediation techniques  
34 for resolving conflicts between and among pupils without violence.

1           (2) Develop a process for discussing the harassment, intimidation or bullying policy with  
2 pupils. The process may include teaching pupils techniques for preventing and resolving conflicts  
3 without violence, including dating violence and interpersonal violence.

4           (k) A school district or public school academy shall incorporate information regarding  
5 the school district or public or private school academy's policy against harassment, intimidation  
6 or bullying into each school's employee training program.

7           (l) This section does not prevent a victim from seeking redress under any other available  
8 law, either civil or criminal. This section does not create or alter any tort liability.

9           (m) It shall be a misdemeanor when a person intentionally:

10           (1) Places one or more telephone calls anonymously, at an hour or hours known to be  
11 inconvenient, or in an offensively repetitious manner, or without a legitimate purpose of  
12 communication, and by this action knowingly annoys or alarms the recipient; or

13           (2) Communicates by telephone, e-mail, cell phone, or text message to another that a  
14 relative or other person has been injured, killed or is ill, when the communication is known to be  
15 false.

16           SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS

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- 1           This act would make it a misdemeanor to make telephone calls and certain other  
2 anonymous communications that knowingly annoy or alarm the recipient of the telephone call.  
3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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