



Testimony before the
House Committee on Education
on
HB 2578 – Concerning school districts; relating to publication of bullying policies.
by
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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

KASB appears as neutral on this bill, because it does not appear to be either specifically supported or opposed under positions adopted by our members. The KASB Delegate Assembly has adopted the following statement:

F. School Safety and Security KASB supports evidence-based, cost-effective steps to foster safe and secure school environments.

In reviewing this bill, we believe it does three things. First, the district's plan to address bullying must be published on the school district's website with a link prominently posted on the home page of such website. Second, the plan must be distributed annually to parents and guardians who have children enrolled in a school in the school district. Third, the plan also shall be submitted to the department of education and shall be kept on file with the department.

We believe these steps can be done with relatively little cost and effort and many districts are already doing the first two. It is important to remember, however; these steps do require SOME additional costs. For example, there isn't even a state law requiring districts to HAVE a website – but of course they do because that is now expected for virtually every organization and government. Maintaining and updating a website DOES require some level of technical expertise districts must either provide themselves or contract to accomplish.

Districts are often criticized by some for failing to maintain state-required data on their websites. We don't think this is a conscious failure to follow the law; it has more to do with the challenges of keeping websites up-to-date and effectively designed.

Likewise, districts certainly should make bullying plans available to parents and many will do so in student handbooks or other materials sent home with students. Depending on the scope of the plan, that also entails a cost if printed. Not every parent will have access to e-mail or have a current address.

We mention these challenges not because what this bill proposes are bad ideas, but simply to note they are the kind of new expectations we have added that increase school costs – and are not “classroom expenses.” Why does education cost more? Because we expect it to do more.

Finally, we would also note that the requirement to send each district's plan to the KSDE is also a fairly easy step, but it is unclear what KSDE is supposed to do with these, since there is no requirement for review or approval.

We urge the committee to simply weigh the costs and benefits of these proposed new requirements. KASB will work with our members to implement any changes approved by the Legislature.