

5391

2011-2012 Regular Sessions

I N A S S E M B L Y

February 18, 2011

Introduced by M. of A. McDONOUGH -- read once and referred to the
Committee on Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to prohibiting bullying
on school property; and to amend the penal law, in relation to estab-
lishing the crime of aggravated harassment of teachers and school
personnel

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, REPRESENTED IN SENATE AND ASSEM-
BLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

1 Section 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as
2 "schools as safe harbors act".
3 S 2. Legislative intent. In recent years, the state legislature has
4 taken several steps to ensure that school pupils, teachers and other
5 personnel are provided with a safe and secure learning environment on
6 all school property. Through the enactment of provisions requiring the
7 fingerprinting of a school district's prospective employees and the
8 enactment of the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education Act, the
9 legislature has ensured the increased safety of our schools. However,
10 to address concerns that harassment of pupils and school personnel
11 through acts of bullying can be both disruptive to the learning process
12 and harmful, mentally and/or physically, to intended victims, the legis-
13 lature finds that enactment of this legislation to prohibit bullying on
14 school property is necessary and appropriate to further ensure that New
15 York state's public schools be made as safe as possible.
16 S 3. Section 801-a of the education law, as added by chapter 181 of
17 the laws of 2000, is amended to read as follows:
18 S 801-a. Instruction in civility, citizenship and character education.
19 The regents shall ensure that the course of instruction in grades
20 kindergarten through twelve includes a component on civility, citizen-
21 ship and character education. Such component shall instruct students on
22 the principles of honesty, tolerance, personal responsibility, respect
23 for others, observance of laws and rules, courtesy, dignity and other

EXPLANATION--Matter in *ITALICS* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[] is old law to be omitted.

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1 traits which will enhance the quality of their experiences in, and
2 contributions to, the community. SUCH COMPONENT SHALL ALSO ADDRESS
3 METHODS OF DISCOURAGING ACTS OF BULLYING, AS DEFINED IN SUBDIVISION ONE
4 OF SECTION TWENTY-EIGHT HUNDRED THREE OF THIS CHAPTER, AGAINST FELLOW
5 STUDENTS. The regents shall determine how to incorporate such component
6 in existing curricula and the commissioner shall promulgate any regu-
7 lations needed to carry out such determination of the regents.

8 S 4. Section 801-a of the education law, as added by chapter 482 of
9 the laws of 2010, is amended to read as follows:

10 S 801-a. Instruction in civility, citizenship and character education.
11 The regents shall ensure that the course of instruction in grades
12 kindergarten through twelve includes a component on civility, citizen-
13 ship and character education. Such component shall instruct students on
14 the principles of honesty, tolerance, personal responsibility, respect
15 for others, observance of laws and rules, courtesy, dignity and other
16 traits which will enhance the quality of their experiences in, and
17 contributions to, the community. The regents shall determine how to
18 incorporate such component in existing curricula and the commissioner
19 shall promulgate any regulations needed to carry out such determination
20 of the regents. SUCH COMPONENT SHALL ALSO ADDRESS METHODS OF DISCOURAG-
21 ING ACTS OF BULLYING, AS DEFINED IN SUBDIVISION ONE OF SECTION
22 TWENTY-EIGHT HUNDRED THREE OF THIS CHAPTER, AGAINST FELLOW STUDENTS. For
23 the purposes of this section, "tolerance," "respect for others" and
24 "dignity" shall include awareness and sensitivity to discrimination or
25 harassment and civility in the relations of people of different races,
26 weights, national origins, ethnic groups, religions, religious prac-
27 tices, mental or physical abilities, sexual orientations, genders, and
28 sexes.

29 S 5. Subdivision 2 of section 2801 of the education law is amended by
30 adding a new paragraph a-1 to read as follows:

31 A-1. PROVISIONS PROHIBITING BULLYING ON SCHOOL PROPERTY, INCLUDING A
32 SCHOOL FUNCTION, PURSUANT TO SECTION TWENTY-EIGHT HUNDRED THREE OF THIS
33 ARTICLE;

34 S 6. Subdivision 2 of section 2801 of the education law is amended by
35 adding a new paragraph f-1 to read as follows:

36 F-1. WHEN ANY SCHOOL EMPLOYEE HAVING REASONABLE CAUSE TO SUSPECT THAT
37 A STUDENT HAS COMMITTED AN ACT OF BULLYING, AS DEFINED IN SECTION TWEN-
38 TY-EIGHT HUNDRED THREE OF THIS ARTICLE, THE SCHOOL EMPLOYEE SHALL REPORT
39 SUCH INCIDENT TO THE PRINCIPAL, OR DESIGNEE THEREOF, WHO IN TURN SHALL
40 REPORT SUCH INCIDENT TO THE SUPERINTENDENT, UPON A DETERMINATION BY THE
41 PRINCIPAL, OR DESIGNEE THEREOF, THAT THERE IS A REASONABLE SUSPICION
42 THAT THE ACT OCCURRED. FAILURE OF AN EMPLOYEE TO MAKE A REPORT PURSUANT
43 TO THIS PARAGRAPH MAY NOT BE THE BASIS FOR ANY DISCIPLINARY ACTION OR
44 PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT CHARGE AGAINST THE EMPLOYEE;

45 S 7. The education law is amended by adding a new section 2803 to read
46 as follows:

47 S 2803. BULLYING PROHIBITED. 1. FOR PURPOSES OF THIS SECTION, THE
48 FOLLOWING TERMS SHALL HAVE THE FOLLOWING MEANINGS:

49 A. "PUBLIC SCHOOL" MEANS:

50 (I) A PUBLIC ELEMENTARY OR SECONDARY SCHOOL, KINDERGARTEN OR PRE-KIN-
51 DERGARTEN PROGRAM, ADULT OR CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM OR OTHER EDUCA-
52 TIONAL PROGRAM OPERATED BY A SCHOOL DISTRICT, CHARTER SCHOOL, BOARD OF
53 COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, COUNTY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND EXTEN-
54 SION BOARDS; AND

55 (II) A SCHOOL OR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM THAT SERVES STUDENTS IN ANY OF
56 GRADES KINDERGARTEN THROUGH TWELVE AND IS OPERATED BY THE DEPARTMENT, OR

1 IS OPERATED OR SUPERVISED BY ANOTHER STATE AGENCY OR A POLITICAL SUBDI-
2 VISION AND IS SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWELVE OF
3 THIS CHAPTER.

4 B. "PUBLICLY FUNDED SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM" MEANS AN APPROVED
5 PROVIDER OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES UNDER SECTION
6 FORTY-FOUR HUNDRED TEN OF THIS CHAPTER, AN APPROVED PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL
7 OR NON-RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL FOR THE PROVISION OF SPECIAL SERVICES OR
8 PROGRAMS PURSUANT TO SUBDIVISION TWO OF SECTION FORTY-FOUR HUNDRED ONE
9 OF THIS CHAPTER, A STATE-SUPPORTED SCHOOL SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIONS OF
10 ARTICLE EIGHTY-FIVE OF THIS CHAPTER OR ANY OTHER AGENCY OR ENTITY THAT
11 PROVIDES SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS OR SERVICES PURSUANT TO THE
12 PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE EIGHTY-ONE OR EIGHTY-NINE OF THIS CHAPTER.

13 C. "SCHOOL PROPERTY" MEANS IN OR WITHIN ANY BUILDING, STRUCTURE,
14 ATHLETIC PLAYING FIELD, PLAYGROUND, PARKING LOT OR LAND CONTAINED WITHIN
15 THE REAL PROPERTY BOUNDARY LINE OF A PUBLIC SCHOOL OR A PUBLICLY FUNDED
16 SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM; OR IN OR ON A SCHOOL BUS, AS DEFINED IN
17 SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-TWO OF THE VEHICLE AND TRAFFIC LAW; AND A
18 "SCHOOL FUNCTION" MEANS A SCHOOL SPONSORED EXTRA-CURRICULAR EVENT OR
19 ACTIVITY.

20 D. "BULLYING" MEANS THREATENING, STALKING OR SEEKING TO COERCE OR
21 COMPEL A PERSON TO DO SOMETHING; ENGAGING IN VERBAL OR PHYSICAL CONDUCT
22 THAT THREATENS ANOTHER WITH HARM, INCLUDING INTIMIDATION THROUGH THE USE
23 OF EPITHETS OR SLURS INVOLVING RACE, ETHNICITY, NATIONAL ORIGIN, RELI-
24 GION, RELIGIOUS PRACTICES, GENDER, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, OR DISABILITY.

25 2. NO STUDENT SHALL BE SUBJECT TO BULLYING BY ANY STUDENT OF A PUBLIC
26 SCHOOL OR PUBLICLY FUNDED SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM.

27 3. A. ANY PERSON FOUND TO BE IN VIOLATION OF SUBDIVISION TWO OF THIS
28 SECTION IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL OR ON SCHOOL PROPERTY SHALL BE SUBJECT TO
29 DISCIPLINARY ACTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DISTRICT'S CODE OF CONDUCT
30 ADOPTED PURSUANT TO SECTION TWENTY-EIGHT HUNDRED ONE OF THIS ARTICLE AND
31 THE DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES APPLICABLE TO STUDENTS OR EMPLOYEES OF THE
32 PUBLIC SCHOOL. ANY PERSON FOUND TO BE IN VIOLATION OF SUBDIVISION TWO OF
33 THIS SECTION IN A PUBLICLY FUNDED SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM SHALL BE
34 SUBJECT TO DISCIPLINE UNDER THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF SUCH PROGRAM
35 GOVERNING STUDENT CONDUCT OR EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE.

36 B. NOTHING IN THIS SECTION SHALL BE CONSTRUED TO CREATE A PRIVATE
37 CAUSE OF ACTION.

38 4. NOTHING IN THIS SECTION SHALL APPLY, OR BE CONSTRUED TO APPLY, TO
39 PRIVATE, RELIGIOUS OR DENOMINATIONAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS. NOR SHALL
40 THIS SECTION PRECLUDE OR LIMIT, OR BE PERCEIVED TO PRECLUDE OR LIMIT,
41 ANY RIGHT OR CAUSE OF ACTION PROVIDED UNDER ANY LOCAL, STATE OR FEDERAL
42 ORDINANCE, LAW, RULE OR REGULATION.

43 5. A PLAIN-LANGUAGE, AGE-APPROPRIATE DESCRIPTION OF THE POLICIES
44 OUTLINED IN SUBDIVISION TWO OF THIS SECTION SHALL BE DISTRIBUTED TO
45 EMPLOYEES, STUDENTS AND PARENTS OF EACH PUBLIC SCHOOL OR PUBLICLY-FUNDED
46 SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM ON AT LEAST AN ANNUAL BASIS. IN THE CASE OF
47 PUBLIC SCHOOLS, SUCH REQUIREMENT SHALL BE MET BY INCLUDING SUCH
48 DESCRIPTION IN THE SUMMARY OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT PROVIDED TO EACH
49 STUDENT AND MAILED TO PARENTS PURSUANT TO SUBDIVISION FOUR OF SECTION
50 TWENTY-EIGHT HUNDRED ONE OF THIS ARTICLE.

51 6. THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SECTION SHALL BE SEVERABLE, AND IF ANY COURT
52 OF COMPETENT JURISDICTION DECLARES ANY PHRASE, CLAUSE, SENTENCE OR
53 PROVISION OF THIS ARTICLE TO BE INVALID, OR ITS APPLICABILITY TO ANY
54 GOVERNMENT AGENCY, PERSON OR CIRCUMSTANCE, IS DECLARED INVALID, THE
55 REMAINDER OF THIS ARTICLE AND ITS RELEVANT APPLICABILITY SHALL NOT BE
56 AFFECTED.

1 S 8. Section 3028-c of the education law, as added by chapter 181 of
2 the laws of 2000, is amended to read as follows:

3 S 3028-c. Protection of school employees who report acts of BULLYING
4 OR violence and weapons possession. Any school employee having reason-
5 able cause to suspect that a person has committed an act of BULLYING AS
6 SUCH TERM IS DEFINED IN SECTION TWENTY-EIGHT HUNDRED THREE OF THIS CHAP-
7 TER OR violence while in or on school property, or having reasonable
8 cause to suspect that a person has committed an act of BULLYING AS SUCH
9 TERM IS DEFINED IN SECTION TWENTY-EIGHT HUNDRED THREE OF THIS CHAPTER OR
10 violence upon a student, school employee or volunteer either upon school
11 grounds or elsewhere, or having reasonable cause to suspect that a
12 person has brought a gun, knife, bomb or other instrument capable of or
13 that appears capable of causing death or physical injury upon school
14 grounds who in good faith reports such information to school officials,
15 to the commissioner, or to law enforcement authorities, shall have immu-
16 nity from any civil liability that may arise from the making of such
17 report, and no school district or school district employee shall take,
18 request or cause a retaliatory action against any such employee who
19 makes such report.

20 S 9. The penal law is amended by adding a new section 240.33 to read
21 as follows:

22 S 240.33 AGGRAVATED HARASSMENT OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOL PERSONNEL.

23 A PERSON IS GUILTY OF AGGRAVATED HARASSMENT OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOL
24 PERSONNEL WHEN, WITH INTENT TO HARASS, ANNOY OR ALARM A PERSON WHOM HE
25 OR SHE KNOWS OR REASONABLY SHOULD KNOW TO BE A TEACHER, ADMINISTRATOR OR
26 OTHER STAFF MEMBER OF A PUBLIC OR PRIVATE ELEMENTARY, INTERMEDIATE,
27 JUNIOR HIGH, VOCATIONAL OR HIGH SCHOOL, ENGAGED IN THE COURSE OF HIS OR
28 HER EMPLOYMENT, HE OR SHE STRIKES, SHOVES OR KICKS SUCH TEACHER, ADMIN-
29 ISTRATOR OR OTHER STAFF MEMBER, AND WHEN SUCH CONDUCT TAKES PLACE ON
30 SCHOOL PROPERTY AS DEFINED IN SECTION TWENTY-EIGHT HUNDRED ONE OF THE
31 EDUCATION LAW WHERE SUCH TEACHER, ADMINISTRATOR OR OTHER STAFF MEMBER IS
32 EMPLOYED OR ASSIGNED ON THE DATE OF SUCH CONDUCT.

33 AGGRAVATED HARASSMENT OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOL PERSONNEL IS A CLASS B
34 MISDEMEANOR.

35 S 10. This act shall take effect on the first of September next
36 succeeding the date on which it shall have become a law provided that
37 section four of this act shall take effect on the same date and in the
38 same manner as chapter 482 of the laws of 2010, takes effect.