S T A T E O F N E W Y O R K

6884

I N S E N A T E

April 4, 2012

Introduced by Sen. KLEIN -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to including cyber bullying in the provisions of the dignity for all students act and courses of study in cyber bullying for pupils in grades five through nine

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

Section 1. Section 10 of the education law, as added by chapter 482 of the laws of 2010, is amended to read as follows:

S 10. Legislative intent. The legislature finds that students' ability to learn and to meet high academic standards, and a school's ability to educate its students, are compromised by incidents of discrimination or harassment including bullying, CYBER BULLYING, taunting or intimidation. It is hereby declared to be the policy of the state to afford all students in public schools an environment free of discrimination and harassment. The purpose of this article is to foster civility in public schools and to prevent and prohibit conduct which is inconsistent with a school's educational mission.

S 2. Subdivision 7 of section 11 of the education law, as added by chapter 482 of the laws of 2010, is amended and two new subdivisions 8 and 9 are added to read as follows:

7. "Harassment" shall mean the creation of a hostile environment by conduct, CYBER BULLYING, or by verbal threats, intimidation or abuse, CONDUCTED IN ANY MANNER INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION, that has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional or physical well-being; or conduct, CYBER BULLYING, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse, CONDUCTED IN ANY MANNER INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION, that reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his or her physical safety; such conduct, CYBER BULLYING, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse includes but is not limited to conduct, CYBER BULLYING, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight,

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

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national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex.

8. "ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION" SHALL MEAN ANY TRANSFER OF SIGNS, SIGNALS, WRITINGS, IMAGES, SOUNDS, DATA OR INTELLIGENCE OF ANY NATURE TRANSMITTED, IN WHOLE OR IN PART, BY A WIRE, RADIO, ELECTROMAGNETIC, PHOTO-ELECTRONIC OR PHOTO-OPTIONAL SYSTEM. ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION SHALL INCLUDE, BUT NOT BE LIMITED TO, THE TRANSFER OF SUCH COMMUNICATION THROUGH THE INTERNET.

9. "CYBER BULLYING" SHALL MEAN TO INTENTIONALLY ENGAGE IN A COURSE OF CONDUCT USING ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DIRECTED AT A CHILD UNDER THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN YEARS, WHEN THE ACTOR KNOWS OR REASONABLY SHOULD KNOW THAT SUCH CONDUCT:

A. HARASSES, THREATENS, INTIMIDATES, ABUSES OR CREATES A HOSTILE SOCIAL OR PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT FOR SUCH CHILD;

B. INSTILLS A REASONABLE FEAR OF MATERIAL HARM TO THE PHYSICAL, MENTAL OR EMOTIONAL HEALTH, WELL-BEING, SAFETY OR PROPERTY OF SUCH CHILD;

C. CAUSES MATERIAL HARM TO THE PHYSICAL, MENTAL OR EMOTIONAL HEALTH, WELL-BEING, SAFETY OR PROPERTY OF SUCH CHILD;

D. CAUSES PUBLIC EMBARRASSMENT, SHAME, SOCIAL OSTRACISM OR UNDUE ATTENTION TO SUCH CHILD; OR

E. INCLUDES THE IMPERSONATION OF ANOTHER PERSON BY ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION TO CAUSE OR WITH INTENT TO CAUSE HARM AS SPECIFIED IN PARAGRAPH A, B, C OR D OF THIS SUBDIVISION.

S 3. Subdivision 2 of section 13 of the education law, as added by chapter 482 of the laws of 2010, is amended to read as follows:

2. Guidelines to be used in school training programs to discourage the development of discrimination or harassment, AND TO MAKE SCHOOL EMPLOYEES AWARE OF THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF CYBER BULLYING AND HARASSMENT ON STUDENTS AND OTHER SCHOOL EMPLOYEES, and that are designed:

a. to raise the awareness and sensitivity of school employees to potential discrimination or harassment, and

b. to enable employees to prevent and respond to discrimination or harassment; and

S 4. Subdivisions 2 and 3 of section 14 of the education law, as added by chapter 482 of the laws of 2010, are amended and a new subdivision 4 is added to read as follows:

2. Provide grants, from funds appropriated for such purpose, to local school districts to assist them in implementing the guidelines set forth in this section; [and]

3. Promulgate regulations, GUIDANCE OR MODEL POLICIES to assist school districts in implementing this article including, but not limited to, [regulations to assist] ASSISTING school districts in developing measured, balanced, and age-appropriate responses to violations of this policy, with remedies and procedures focusing on intervention and education[.], AND PROVIDE GUIDANCE RELATED TO THE APPLICATION OF SUCH REGULATIONS, GUIDANCE OR MODEL POLICIES ON THE MANNER AND EXTENT TO WHICH BEHAVIOR THAT OCCURS OFF SCHOOL PROPERTY MAY BE CONSIDERED IN FORMULATING AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO A VIOLATION OF SUCH REGULATIONS, GUIDANCE OR MODEL POLICIES; AND

4. PROVIDE GUIDANCE AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS RELATED TO BEST PRACTICES IN ADDRESSING CYBER BULLYING AND HARASSMENT, AND HELPING FAMILIES TO WORK COOPERATIVELY WITH SCHOOLS IN ADDRESSING SUCH ISSUES, WHETHER CONDUCTED ON OR OFF SCHOOL PROPERTY.

S 5. Section 801-a of the education law, as amended by chapter 482 of the laws of 2010, is amended to read as follows:

S 801-a. Instruction in civility, citizenship and character education. The regents shall ensure that the course of instruction in grades kindergarten through twelve includes a component on civility, citizenship and character education. Such component shall instruct students on the principles of honesty, tolerance, personal responsibility, respect for others, DISCOURAGING ACTS OF HARASSMENT AND CYBER BULLYING, observance of laws and rules, courtesy, dignity and other traits which will enhance the quality of their experiences in, and contributions to, the community. SUCH COMPONENT MAY INCLUDE INSTRUCTION ON SAFE, RESPONSIBLE USE OF THE INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS. The regents shall determine how to incorporate such component in existing curricula and the commissioner shall promulgate any regulations needed to carry out such determination of the regents. For the purposes of this section, "tolerance," "respect for others" and "dignity" shall include awareness and sensitivity to discrimination or harassment and civility in the relations of people of different races, weights, national origins, ethnic groups, religions, religious practices, mental or physical abilities, sexual orientations, genders, and sexes.

S 6. The education law is amended by adding a new section 815 to read as follows:

S 815. COURSES OF STUDY IN CYBER BULLYING. 1. FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS SECTION:

A. "CYBER BULLYING" SHALL HAVE THE SAME MEANING AS PROVIDED IN SUBDIVISION NINE OF SECTION ELEVEN OF THIS CHAPTER.

B. "ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION" SHALL HAVE THE SAME MEANING AS PROVIDED IN SUBDIVISION EIGHT OF SECTION ELEVEN OF THIS CHAPTER.

2. EVERY SCHOOL DISTRICT IN THE STATE SHALL PROVIDE, TO PUPILS IN GRADES FIVE THROUGH NINE, INSTRUCTION DESIGNED TO CURTAIL OR ELIMINATE CYBER BULLYING AND PROMOTE CIVILITY WHEN USING THE INTERNET AND CONVEYING AN ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION. SUCH CURRICULA SHALL INSTRUCT STUDENTS ON THE PRINCIPLES OF TOLERANCE, PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY, RESPECT FOR OTHERS, OBSERVANCE OF LAWS AND RULES, COURTESY AND OTHER TRAITS THAT SHOULD BE OBSERVED DURING USE OF THE INTERNET OR WHEN CONVEYING AN ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION.

3. A SCHOOL DISTRICT MAY, INSTEAD OF ESTABLISHING A SEPARATE CLASS OR DESIGNATED PERIOD OF TIME DEVOTED TO A COURSE ON CYBER BULLYING, INTEGRATE SUCH COURSE OF STUDY OR INSTRUCTION INTO OTHER RELATED CLASSES THAT PROVIDE INSTRUCTION IN SUBJECTS RELATED TO CIVILITY, CITIZENSHIP AND CHARACTER EDUCATION PURSUANT TO SECTION EIGHT HUNDRED ONE-A OF THIS ARTICLE, OR HEALTH EDUCATION PURSUANT TO SECTION EIGHT HUNDRED FOUR OF THIS ARTICLE, OR ANY OTHER COURSE OF INSTRUCTION DEEMED APPROPRIATE BY THE SCHOOL DISTRICT.

4. THE COMMISSIONER SHALL PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO AID IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CURRICULA FOR SUCH COURSES OF STUDY WHICH SHALL BE AGE APPROPRIATE AND DEVELOPED ACCORDING TO THE NEEDS AND ABILITIES OF PUPILS AT SUCCESSIVE GRADE LEVELS IN ORDER TO PROVIDE AWARENESS, SKILLS, INFORMATION AND SUPPORT TO AID IN THE ELIMINATION OF CYBER BULLYING.

S 7. This act shall take effect on the same date and in the same manner as chapter 482 of the laws of 2010, as amended, takes effect; provided, however, that effective immediately, the addition, amendment, and/or repeal of any rule or regulation necessary for the implementation of the provisions of this act on its effective date is authorized and directed to be made and completed on or before such effective date.