



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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CONTACT: Molly Woon (503) 986-1074
molly.woon@state.or.us

Senate votes to protect kids, strengthen anti-bullying legislation *HB 2599 modifies 2001 law, addresses issues of psychological well-being*

SALEM – Legislation with the broad support of a coalition of education, minority, and student advocacy groups cleared its final vote this morning in the Senate. HB 2599 strengthens existing statute by streamlining the complaint process, encouraging training for school employees, and modifying the definition of bullying.

“Kids who suffer at the hand of a bully are more likely to experience depression, drug abuse, anxiety, even suicide – problems that continue into adulthood,” said Senator Mark Hass (D-Beaverton), chair of the Senate Education Committee, during his floor speech. “Current law defines bullying almost exclusively on the basis of physical harm. But we all know that a bullying doesn’t just mean fighting or shoving or pushing – it causes mental anguish that can be far more damaging.”

Current Oregon law doesn’t mandate the adoption of anti-bullying policies – only their development. Additionally, many of the most basic requirements to post policies and designate staff to take bully complaints are often not enforced. HB 2599 makes clear the requirements of school districts to enforce anti-bullying policies.

“Children can’t learn unless they feel safe in the classroom,” said Senate Majority Leader Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin). “This bill is especially important for students who are made to feel like they ‘don’t fit in.’ It will help students of color, students with disabilities, and gay and transgender students – all of whom report higher instances of bullying than their peers.”

Under HB 2599 the definition of harassment, intimidation, and bullying includes interfering with the psychological well-being of a student and may be based on, but not limited to, membership in a protected class. Protected class includes race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, familial status, source of income, or disability.

“This legislation will reduce bullying and harassment,” said Hass, noting a student by The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence says effective policies can cut the incidence of bullying in half.

The bill will now go to the Governor’s desk for his signature.

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