



Miss Wolcott 2007

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**To: Conn. General Assembly-Education Committee
The Honorable Thomas P. Gaffey- Co-Chair
The Honorable Andrew M. Fleischmann Co-Chair
Vice Chairs, Ranking Members, and Members**

From: Miss Nicole Paquette, Miss Wolcott 2007

**Subject: Raised Bill No. 1094
An Act Concerning School Bullying**

My name is Nicole Paquette, and I am a senior honors student majoring in psychology at the University of Connecticut. I have plans to attend the University of Connecticut School of Law in the fall. I have been a victim of school bullying and a staunch advocate of bully prevention for four years. I have volunteered around my community by speaking to children about bullying, attended educational conferences about school bullying, and have made contacts with a number of anti-bullying associations at the state and national level. I feel the approval of the Connecticut Bill 1094: An Act Concerning Bullying, will improve the lives of many students, teachers, administrators, and parents throughout the state. Accordingly, I wish to discuss why each section of this new bullying bill is vital to an improved educational environment.

I strongly believe that the definition of bullying should be expanded to include cyber-bullying. Bullying can be just as psychologically harmful over the internet when individuals receive harassing messages. These messages can be even more threatening because the internet allows individuals the availability of anonymity.

Approving fines for schools that do not comply with anti-bullying policies is not only a positive social policy, but is also financially responsible. With the suicide of J. Daniel Scruggs here in Connecticut, we have already witnessed the tragic outcomes that can occur when bullying is not reported. After the passage of the Connecticut Public Act 02-119, A Law Concerning Bullying, it was evident that many schools were not complying with reporting or acting upon improving the environment for bullied students. These acts of noncompliance on the part of school officials can and has resulted in lawsuits to school districts (Santoro v. Town of Hamden, 2006 WL 2536595 Conn.Super 2006). By approving the fine for noncompliance, not only will this legislature send the message that the State of Connecticut cares for the wellbeing of children, but also a message warning the school districts of the financial risks of not effectively dealing with bullying.

Even though bullying prevention is an important social issue of which many educators, students, and parents are becoming more aware, they do not have adequate education or training on how to deal with bullying. It is estimated that thousands of children miss school each day because they fear being bullied at school. Additionally, those children who do attend school regularly may experience severe emotional stress, distracting them from reaching their full potential in the classroom.

During my personal experiences meeting with students and discussing their experiences with bullying, I have had many students confide to me that teachers ignored their pleas for help. Many within the school districts still hold the outdated notion that bullying is just another part of childhood and children should learn to fight their own battles.

With the rise in the level of violence in modern culture, combined with the breakdown of the traditional American family support system, it is increasingly important for children to know where to turn to in times of crisis. Throughout the United States, Americans have witnessed the dangers of not preventing school bullying as evidenced by the many school shootings and stabbings. Many states have already passed similar bills such as the one being proposed in Connecticut in order to improve the quality of their education system. The cost of not taking a positive course of action to prevent further suicides, lawsuits, acts of school violence, and academic and psychological harm to Connecticut students is too high. Show Connecticut families and teachers that you care about the future leaders of our state and vote for Bill 1094, An Act Concerning Bullying.