



THE CONNECTICUT PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

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February 11, 2007

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and Members of the Committee on Education:

My name is Dr. Mikaru Shichi Lasher. I am a member of the Connecticut Psychological Association Children & Youth Committee, and I hold a doctorate in Educational Psychology. I would like to provide testimony regarding Raised Bill 1094, "An Act Concerning School Bullying". I commend the legislature on the initial passage of the 2002 anti-bullying bill. However, I have some reservations regarding the current proposed additions to the bill.

As my colleague Dr. Virginia Shiller has written to address other aspects of the bill, I will specifically focus on the addition of Section 2, which proposes the use of grants to fund a specific program of "school-wide assemblies involving group discussion or open-mike sessions". While these types of programs may indeed have benefits, their effectiveness has not yet been demonstrated through carefully researched outcome studies.

Well-conducted outcome studies *have* shown that comprehensive, multifaceted bullying prevention programs that are implemented school-wide and involve staff, students, and parents are effective in reducing the incidence of bullying in schools. A comprehensive program includes the following components: a) implementing systemic changes such as the development of clear school policies and consequences to acts of bullying, b) increasing adult awareness and intervention, c) building students' skills in assertiveness and emotional regulation, d) changing student attitudes toward bullying, e) increasing bystanders' socially responsible behavior and the associated skills and beliefs, and f) accurately tracking and reporting bullying incidents to determine whether programs are effective.

It would certainly be an option to provide a small amount of grant money for piloting and researching the "open-mike" programs, but it does not seem to make sense to primarily offer money for these essentially unproven programs which have a relatively limited scope. It would be important to include grants to fund bullying prevention programs to support scientifically proven programs at the elementary and middle school levels. Well-researched programs show that it is important to nurture and develop pro-social behaviors and empathy, and to change attitudes about bullying from an early age in order to prevent bullying behavior in the teenage years.

We look for your help and leadership in making our schools safer for our children. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.