

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Jose Olmeda and I am a long time resident of East Hartford, Connecticut.

My son is living proof that the law on Bullying must be improved. All school staff and individuals who interact with children need to be trained and to understand what is bullying and how to handle it.

My son has always been a well-behaved and good academic student but three years ago my son was unjustly labeled a bully at the age of 10 because the principal of O'Connell School in East Hartford did not want to hear my concerns. He ignored my concerns and did nothing to address the situation but when my son reacts everything was turned around and now my son was labeled a bully. As parents, we were never informed of any actions to be taken until they were already taken. The principal with the superintendent's approval put a letter in my son's educational file stating that he was a bully. We asked for a meeting but they came up with a million excuses and they still refused to remove the letter. They told us that it was the law and that they had to put that letter in his file and it could not be removed. At the end of the school year they came up with another excuse as to why the letter should remain in his file. I believe that my son was used as a scapegoat in order to enforce the bullying mandate. I also believe that the bully in this case was and is the principal. He exercised his authority without any concern for the damage he was causing to a child. The town's board of education and numerous other representatives have refused to hear me out or just shrugged me off by saying they can not do anything for my son. I believe that bullying laws are needed but individuals who interact with children need to understand the law and not just rush to label kids without justifiable reasons. A process should be in place. In all situations, parents must be involved in the solution and not allow the principal and/or the superintendent to be the judge and jury after all we are talking about children. Bullying is a serious issue for all involved and one person should not be allowed to make the final decision. Administrators need to be held accountable but they should not be allowed to abuse their authority.

What is really sad and heartbreaking is that my son is the one with the bully label in his file but to this day he is the one that continues to be bullied. I welcome any assistance from anyone who can help me in removing this letter from my son's educational file. I am not solely advocating for my son but for all the children of the State of Connecticut. This situation is a reality

and it needs immediate and urgent attention. Action is needed now because tomorrow may be too late.

I thank you for your time and I pray that for my son's future, you remember his story when passing future School Bulling Laws. Enjoy the rest of your day.