



## State of Connecticut

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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*Testimony by Representative Mitch Bolinsky  
Before the Judiciary Committee  
Supporting SB 1108  
March 20, 2015*

My thanks to the Honorable Co-Chairs, Senator Coleman and Representative Tong; Ranking Members Senator Kissel and Representative Rebimbas; as well as the entire Judiciary Committee for your consideration today of SB-1108, AN ACT CONCERNING THE ZERO-TOLERANCE SAFE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ACT.

I STRONGLY SUPPORT this initiative and urge the committee to raise this bill to the floor.

The intent of this legislation is to increase the penalties for threatening calls, posts, letters and verbalizations of school threats made to or about schools, pre-schools and institutions of higher education.

As a representative of Newtown and Sandy Hook, I'd like to convey to you the deep wounds that still exist in my hometown. Many friends and neighbors continue to work on their personal healing processes after the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy. The community continues to be focused on its collective resiliency as well. However, the local fabric is stretched with every school threat. It is hard to believe but, Newtown and Sandy Hook have been targeted by such threats with greater frequency than most communities. Each of which results in a lockdown, leaving every resident holding their breath until public safety officials issue a stand-down order.

Each threat represents a serious setback to our community's healing. Each one prompts a town-wide response that stretches our town leaders, first-responders, educators and support service providers to the max. Each one has an emotional toll. Each one hits the municipal and school budgets.

SB-1108 will deter such threats by raising the consequences of future occurrences. This heightened accountability is absolutely needed!

The American Bar Association in 2001 stated that schools "...must be able to ensure a safe school climate without threatening students' opportunities to learn."<sup>1</sup> According to the research, schools with a progressive disciplinary program that is perceived as fair, firm and consistent, tend to have higher student satisfaction rates with fewer suspensions and expulsions, than those where these responses are not present. (Boylan, 2002; Burke).<sup>2</sup>

Thank you for your time and should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Respectfully,

Representative Mitch Bolinsky

<sup>1</sup> American Bar Association. (2001). Zero tolerance policy. Retrieved online from <http://www.abanet.org/crimjust/juvjus/zerotolreport.html>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.edlawcenter.org/ELCPublic/Publications/PDF/AdvocatingReform\\_ZeroTolerance.pdf](http://www.edlawcenter.org/ELCPublic/Publications/PDF/AdvocatingReform_ZeroTolerance.pdf)