



State of Connecticut

SENATE

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S.B. No. 246 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE ZERO-TOLERANCE SAFE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ACT.

March 2, 2016

Chairmen Coleman and Tong and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Tony Hwang and I am state Senator of Connecticut's 28th District.

SB 246 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE ZERO-TOLERANCE SAFE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ACT - is an essential step we must take as a state to better protect our children, teachers and administrators while they are in school.

Here's why: Our schools have become targets.

Districts throughout Connecticut are facing an increasing number of threats of violence against our schools.

- We've seen them in Newtown – one of the towns in my senate district.
- We've seen the threats in Fairfield, where my family lives.
- And we've seen them here in Stamford.

This is not only driving up costs to our municipalities which must expend finite resources to thoroughly respond to and investigate them, it is having far-reaching and potentially devastating impacts on our children and the entire school community.

I have heard – and I know many of you have heard - compelling and heart-wrenching stories from parents who have lost all sense of security and whose children continue to struggle with the fear and anxiety these threats cause. There are literally hundreds, if not thousands, of victims of each threat against a school. The impact is huge and incredibly damaging, and the penalties of our existing laws do not match the crime.

Connecticut needs to send a clear and powerful message: that we will not tolerate threats of violence against our schools. SB 246 sends that message.

Under the proposal, a new section would be created within the state's existing threatening statutes, pertaining specifically to threats targeting schools. First-degree threatening would become a Class C felony and second-degree threatening would become a Class D felony; they are currently a Class D felony and Class A misdemeanor, respectively.

By establishing this special section of threatening statutes specifically for schools, changing the classification of these crimes and, in the process, strengthening the penalties, we will help foster a safe school environment and make meaningful progress to further our critical work of ensuring public safety remains priority number one in Connecticut.

Finally, I want to thank Rep. Tong, who joined with me in Hartford last week to speak out publicly about why this legislation should become law.

Chairman Tong and I were joined by a wonderful family from Sandy Hook: Bernie and Maureen Reidy – and their children Seamus and Siobhan.

This year, we can show parents like the Reidys that we hear them loud and clear.

Let's send a strong message that we will not tolerate threats of violence against our schools and that we're serious about protecting our children, teachers and administrators.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tong Huang". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.