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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **sSB 453**

#### ***AN ACT CONCERNING CLASSROOM SAFETY AND DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill requires local and regional boards of education, as well as the State Department of Education (SDE), to address daily classroom safety in a manner similar to how they must address bullying and teen dating violence under current law. Under the bill, “daily classroom safety” means a classroom environment in which students and school employees are not assaulted, harassed, verbally abused, or physically harmed by other students, school employees, or parents; or exposed to such acts.

Specifically, the bill makes the following changes to school safety and school climate laws:

1. instructs boards of education to address daily classroom safety in their safe school climate plans (§ 1);
2. requires school district safety committees to expand their focus to include daily classroom safety (§ 2);
3. requires SDE to monitor districts’ instances of daily classroom safety violations and provide them with training and assistance (§§ 3 & 5);
4. adds daily classroom safety to the statewide safe school climate network’s mission (§ 4);
5. expands the duties of school staff in safe school climate leadership positions to include daily classroom safety issues (§ 6);
6. requires the Department of Emergency Services and Public

Protection (DESPP) to amend its school safety and security plan standards to require safe school climate committees to collect and evaluate additional information (§ 7);

7. allows “prevention and intervention strategy” to address daily classroom safety violations (§ 8);
8. requires school principals to notify parents, guardians, and boards of education about daily classroom safety violations (§ 9); and
9. sets conditions and specifies requirements under which teachers may remove from their classroom students who assault, bully, or engage in daily classroom safety violations (§ 10).

The bill also (1) allows safe school climate plans to include mental health services as interventions for individuals who commit recurrent bullying incidents (§ 1) and (2) makes various technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2018

### **§ 1 — SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE PLAN PROVISIONS**

The bill requires safe school climate plans to address daily classroom safety in schools. Current law requires local and regional boards of education to create these plans to address bullying and teen dating violence.

It also requires safe school climate plans to address daily classroom safety in several ways:

1. provide language about daily classroom safety to include in student conduct codes;
2. require schools to notify, within 48 hours of completing an investigation, parents or guardians of students (a) who commit daily classroom safety violations and (b) against whom such acts were directed;

3. require schools to invite parents or guardians of a student who commits a daily classroom safety violation to a meeting to discuss the school's interventions to prevent further violations;
4. establish a procedure for schools to document daily classroom safety violations and the number of such verified acts for public inspection and annual reporting to SDE;
5. direct the development of case-by-case interventions for addressing repeated daily classroom safety violations, which may include counseling, mental health services, and discipline; and
6. require the principal or his or her designee to notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when he or she believes that any daily classroom safety violations constitute criminal conduct.

The bill requires each local and regional board of education to revise its safe school climate plan to include daily classroom safety provisions by September 1, 2019. The provisions must include the following:

1. the named administrator whom teachers must notify when appropriate to discuss student behavior, and the name of others who may be contacted if the administrator is unavailable;
2. a designated location for teachers to send students who seriously disrupt the educational process or threaten the safety of others in the classroom;
3. the procedure to follow when a student's behavior poses a risk of imminent personal injury to a teacher, staff, or other students; and
4. a process in which a teacher and administrator will meet within two school days after an incident to discuss how to address a student's seriously disruptive or threatening behavior.

The bill requires boards to submit their revised plans to SDE for

review and approval. Within 30 days after receiving SDE's approval, boards must (1) make their plans available on their website and on each school in the district's website and (2) ensure that the revised plan is included in the district's publications of the rules, procedures, and conduct standards and in all student handbooks.

## **§ 2 — SCHOOL DISTRICT SAFETY COMMITTEE**

The bill requires, rather than allows, boards of education to establish school district safety committees. It adds teachers to the committee membership, in addition to parents and high school students under current law. It also adds the following committee goals: (1) increase parent awareness of safety and health issues, in addition to staff and student awareness under current law, and (2) review the adequacy of daily classroom safety procedures at each school, in addition to emergency response procedures under current law.

## **§ 3 — SDE ASSISTANCE TO AND MONITORING OF DISTRICTS**

The bill requires SDE to document districts' needs for assistance and training related to daily classroom safety, within available appropriations. It also adds a new purpose for school climate assessment instruments that boards distribute to schools: to collect information that allows SDE to monitor efforts to ensure daily classroom safety over time and compare each district's progress to state trends.

Additionally, the bill requires SDE, beginning by February 1, 2020, and annually thereafter, to report to the Education and Children's committees, as well as the House speaker, Senate president pro tempore, and House and Senate majority and minority leaders on the following topics:

1. the number of verified acts of bullying and daily classroom safety violations in the state;
2. an analysis of (a) school districts' responsive actions and (b) student responses on the uniform, grade-level appropriate safe

school climate assessment instruments; and

3. any recommendations for additional activities or funding to prevent bullying in schools, ensure daily classroom safety, and improve school climate.

#### **§ 4 — STATEWIDE SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE RESOURCE NETWORK**

Current law requires SDE to establish, within available appropriations, a statewide safe school climate resource network for the identification, prevention, and education of school bullying and teen dating violence in Connecticut. The bill adds daily classroom safety to the network's mission.

#### **§ 5 — TRAINING FOR SCHOOL EMPLOYEES**

The bill requires SDE to provide daily classroom safety prevention, identification, and response training, within available appropriations, to any school employee who does not hold educator certification. Current law requires similar training for bullying and teen dating violence.

The bill allows this training to include the following:

1. developmentally appropriate strategies (a) to ensure daily classroom safety and (b) for immediate and effective interventions to ensure classroom safety;
2. information on the interaction and relationship between students violating daily classroom safety; and
3. research findings on daily classroom safety, such as information about the types of students who have been shown to be at-risk for violating classroom safety.

#### **§ 6 — SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE LEADERSHIP DUTIES**

The bill adds duties regarding daily classroom safety to the following individuals and groups with safe school climate leadership roles: district safe school climate coordinators and safe school climate

committees (see BACKGROUND).

***District Safe School Climate Coordinators***

Beginning in the 2018-19 school year, it requires district safe school climate coordinators to do the following in addition to their duties under current law:

1. collaborate with safe school climate specialists, the district's board of education, and the superintendent to prevent, identify, and respond to daily classroom safety violations in district schools;
2. provide data and information about daily classroom safety to SDE, in collaboration with the superintendent; and
3. meet with the safe school climate specialists at least twice each school year to discuss daily classroom safety issues in the district.

***Safe School Climate Committees***

The bill requires the safe school climate committee to address issues relating to daily classroom safety in the school. More specifically, it requires the committee to do the following in addition to its duties under current law:

1. receive copies of completed reports following investigations of daily classroom safety violations;
2. identify and address patterns of acts that violate daily classroom safety among students in the school;
3. implement school security and safety plan provisions (see BACKGROUND) about the collection, evaluation, and reporting of information relating to instances of disturbing or threatening behavior that may not meet the definition of daily classroom safety;
4. review and amend school policies relating to daily classroom safety;

5. educate students, school employees, and students' parents and guardians on daily classroom safety issues;
6. collaborate with the district safe school climate coordinator to collect data on daily classroom safety violations; and
7. perform any other duties the principal determines are related to the prevention, identification, and response to daily classroom safety violations for the school.

### **§ 7 — SCHOOL SECURITY AND SAFETY PLAN STANDARDS**

The bill requires DESPP to amend its school safety and security plan standards (see BACKGROUND) to include a requirement that the safe school climate committee for each school collect and evaluate information relating to instances of disturbing or threatening behavior that may not meet the definition of daily classroom safety and report it as necessary to the district safe school climate coordinator and the school security and safety committee.

### **§ 8 — DAILY CLASSROOM SAFETY PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES**

The bill expands the definition of the term "prevention and intervention strategy" as used in the state laws governing safe school climate plans and safe school climate assessments. Specifically, it expands the definition to include the following:

1. implementation of a positive behavioral intervention and support process or another evidence-based model approach for ensuring daily classroom safety,
2. school rules prohibiting acts that violate daily classroom safety,
3. individual interventions with the child who violates daily classroom safety,
4. promotion of parent involvement to prevent acts that violate daily classroom safety, and
5. mental health services for children whose acts violate daily

classroom safety.

Current law defines this strategy in similar terms for addressing bullying, teen dating violence, harassment, and intimidation.

### **§ 9 — NOTICE TO PARENTS AND BOARDS OF EDUCATION**

The bill requires school principals to notify the parents or guardians of students who commit daily classroom safety violations about the details of such violations. Additionally, when other students witness such violations, principals must notify the local and regional board of education and the witnessing students' parents or guardians about the details of such violations; however, the principal must not reveal the identity of the violating student.

### **§ 10 — CLASSROOM REMOVAL FOR DAILY CLASSROOM SAFETY VIOLATIONS**

Under the bill, a teacher may remove a student from class who has done any of the following:

1. been documented by the teacher to have assaulted the teacher or other students in the classroom,
2. repeatedly committed verified acts of bullying, or
3. engaged in daily classroom safety violations or otherwise engaged in conduct that is seriously disruptive of the educational process or is a threat to the safety of others in the classroom.

If a teacher removes a student under the above circumstances, the bill allows a school administrator to place the student in another educational setting that is best suited to meet the student's needs, such as another classroom, alternative education, in-school suspension, or any other appropriate response. It prohibits, however, the administrator from allowing the student to return to class without the teacher's consent unless the safe school climate committee determines a return is warranted because (1) the student has received appropriate intervention and support and (2) there are adequate protections in the



classroom for the teacher's and other students' safety.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Safe School Climate Leadership Roles***

By law, safe school climate leadership positions include the following:

1. a district safe school climate coordinator for each school district, chosen by the superintendent of each board of education from among existing school district staff, and
2. a safe school climate committee, chosen by the principal of each school, that includes at least one student's parent or guardian (CGS § 10-222k).

### ***School Security and Safety Plan***

The law requires each local and regional board of education to develop a school security and safety plan for each school within its district (CGS § 10-222m). The plan must align with DESPP standards, which provide an all-hazards approach to handling emergencies at public schools (CGS § 10-222n).

## **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 35 Nay 0 (03/23/2018)