

HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 31

49TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2009

INTRODUCED BY

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A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES DEPARTMENT, THE PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO STUDY THE INCIDENCE, NATURE AND EFFECTS OF BULLYING AND OTHER FORMS OF HARASSMENT AFFECTING NEW MEXICO CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

WHEREAS, bullying is defined as an intentional and generally unprovoked attempt by one or more persons to inflict physical pain or psychological distress on one or more victims, and it requires an imbalance of physical or psychological power, with a bully being or being perceived to be the stronger; and

WHEREAS, bullying may be direct, with face-to-face physical or verbal confrontation, or indirect, with less visible action, such as the spreading of rumors or social exclusion; and

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1 WHEREAS, though a single attack on a victim, if severe
2 enough, can be accurately described as bullying, the term more
3 often refers to a series of negative actions that occur
4 frequently; and

5 WHEREAS, the definition of bullying includes repeated and
6 pervasive written, verbal or cyber expressions, physical acts
7 or gestures or a pattern of these elements, which are intended
8 to cause distress in one or more children or youth in a
9 community setting; and

10 WHEREAS, the definition of bullying also includes hazing,
11 harassment, teasing, social exclusion, threat, stalking, theft,
12 physical violence, public humiliation, destruction of property,
13 intimidation or menacing acts committed against a student,
14 which may be based on the student's perceived or actual race,
15 color, gender, ethnicity, national origin, religion,
16 disability, physical appearance, social class, age, sexual
17 orientation or gender identity; and

18 WHEREAS, according to the 2007 New Mexico youth risk and
19 resiliency survey, nine percent of New Mexico high school
20 students reported skipping school within the past thirty days
21 because they felt unsafe at school or while traveling to or
22 from school. In 2009, in order to better define the problem of
23 bullying, the New Mexico youth risk and resiliency survey will
24 collect data that is specific to school bullying; and

25 WHEREAS, American medical association research findings

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1 indicate that bullying has a negative social and public health
2 impact on children and youth; and

3 WHEREAS, a bully may exhibit antisocial or delinquent
4 behaviors, such as vandalism, shoplifting, truancy and frequent
5 drug use, that continue into young adulthood; a bully is more
6 apt to drink, smoke and perform poorly in school; and one in
7 four boys who has been a bully has a criminal record by age
8 thirty; and

9 WHEREAS, a bullied person may experience short-term
10 problems, such as depression and thoughts of suicide, anxiety,
11 loneliness and difficulties with school work, and long-term
12 problems, including low self-esteem and depression; and

13 WHEREAS, in a United States department of education study,
14 younger students were found to be more likely than older
15 students to report being bullied; and

16 WHEREAS, in a United States department of education study,
17 fourteen percent of students reported being the victims of
18 bullying; and

19 WHEREAS, in a United States department of education study,
20 of those students who reported lower grades, the victims of
21 bullying were more likely to report receiving low grades than
22 their non-bullied counterparts; and

23 WHEREAS, victims of, and witnesses to, bullying often do
24 not inform adults because of intimidation by the bullies; and

25 WHEREAS, bullying behavior is identified as a problem that

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1 creates a climate of fear and intimidation and that affects
2 children and youth in multiple environments within the
3 community, including youth clubs, sports and public and private
4 educational settings;

5 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
6 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the children, youth and families
7 department, the public education department and the department
8 of health be requested to conduct a joint study to determine
9 the current status of bullying prevention efforts in the state;
10 to research evidence-based strategies to prevent bullying; to
11 collect, analyze and report data related to the impact of
12 bullying on juvenile justice, education and health; and to make
13 recommendations on the best approach to ensuring effective
14 bullying prevention programs statewide; and

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the secretaries of health,
16 public education and children, youth and families report their
17 findings to an appropriate interim legislative committee and to
18 the legislative education study committee by November 30, 2009;
19 and

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
21 transmitted to the chair of the appropriate interim legislative
22 committee, the director of the legislative education study
23 committee and the secretaries of health, public education and
24 children, youth and families.