

Facts about Matt's Safe Schools Law HB 4162/4091 and SB 107

- ***School bullying is a major and persistent problem with major consequences.***

An Oakland Schools survey of 200 high school students found that 84% said they had witnessed someone being bullied and 98% said they had witnessed teasing, insulting or rumors being spread about another student. The climate of fear created by bullies results in increased absenteeism, decreased academic performance, and increased risk of suicide. Frequently it even leads to vandalism and violence.

- ***Students perceived to be different are at greatest risk.***

Any child that is marginalized as “other” is at risk for bullying. Schools should create a safe environment for all students. Research shows that most bullying happens against youth based on their appearance, and many school professionals do not see the protection of at-risk, minority students as part of their responsibility.

More than 84% of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students report being verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation and nearly 40% report physical harassment. More than 90% of GLBT students regularly hear anti-GLBT comments at school. 85% of GLBT students report that faculty or staff never intervened or intervened only some of the time. GLBT students aren't the only ones at risk of anti-GLBT bullying: **research shows that the majority of students who are bullied for being “gay” are actually straight.**

- ***Educators and administrators want to help but need direction.***

Without clear direction about what behavior is prohibited and how to address and prevent it, many school officials may not act when necessary. Many educators, as well as students, will not protect gay students for fear of being considered gay themselves unless they have guidance to do so.

- ***Enumeration is essential.***

Any time a safe schools bill is introduced we urge its sponsor to enumerate the kinds of students that should be protected. While the goal of any safe schools legislation is to protect all students, we know that enumeration that specifies the categories of students to be protected is critical.

- ***Michigan should be pro-active against bullying.***

Michigan should work to prevent harassment and bullying before it occurs. This bill brings Michigan closer to fulfilling the promise of equal protection under the law and safe schools for every student.

- ***Matt's Safe Schools Law guarantees local control.***

Matt's Safe Schools Law mandates that all school districts have anti-bullying policies, but those districts will remain in charge of those policies.

- ***Education leaders support Matt's Safe Schools Law.***

The Michigan Association of School Boards, Michigan Association of School Administrators the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals, the Michigan Education Association, and the American Federation of Teachers – Michigan all support Matt's Safe Schools Law.

- ***Matt's Safe Schools Law will not increase costs, according to a review by the Michigan State House Fiscal Agency***