

Executive Summary: Health Impact Review of SSB 6439

Concerning Preventing Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying in Public Schools

SSB 6439 has potential to decrease bullying; and evidence indicates that bullying is associated with negative health outcomes. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (LGBTQ), underweight, and overweight students disproportionately experience bullying and poor health outcomes. Therefore mitigating bullying would likely have a stronger positive impact on these populations, thereby decreasing health disparities.

BILL INFORMATION

Sponsors: Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Lias, Litzow, McAuliffe, Billig, Kohl-Welles, Keiser, Pedersen, Mullet, Rolfes, Cleveland, Fraser, Frockt)

Summary of Bill:

- The definition of harassment, intimidation, or bullying is amended to include emotional harm.
- Educational Service Districts (ESD) must develop trainings for the primary contacts (“Compliance Officers”) in their districts regarding the model antiharassment, intimidation, cyberbullying, or bullying policy. The training must be based on the model policy; preexisting resources, trainings, and videos provided on the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction’s (OSPI) website; and include materials on hazing.
- The Compliance Officers must attend the training developed by their ESD at least one time.
- The Washington State School Directors’ Association must consult with the Office of Education Ombuds and others with expertise on civil liberties of students to update the policy to include cyberbullying. The policy must provide guidance to districts on how to enforce cyberbullying policies without violating student rights.

HEALTH IMPACT REVIEW

Summary of Findings:

We have assumed, based on bill language, that when developing trainings ESDs would fully leverage the resources on OSPI’s website which include best practices in bullying prevention, and that this has potential to improve Compliance Officers’ knowledge of and ability to address this issue thereby potentially decreasing bullying. If these assumptions are not met than the trainings may not be effective in reducing bullying.

This health impact review found the following evidence regarding the provisions in SSB 6439:

- Very strong evidence that decreasing bullying would likely improve health outcomes for students.
- Strong evidence that LGBTQ students are at high risk for being bullied and would therefore likely see improved health outcomes as a result of decreased bullying.
- Very strong evidence that LGBTQ youth disproportionately experience negative health outcomes (such as those associated with bullying), therefore improving health outcomes for this population would likely decrease health disparities.
- Some evidence that underweight and overweight students are at high risk for being bullied and would therefore likely see improved health outcomes as a result of decreased bullying.
- Some evidence that underweight and overweight youth disproportionately experience negative health outcomes (such as those associated with bullying), therefore improving health outcomes for these populations would likely decrease health disparities.

FULL REVIEW

For review methods, a logic model showing the potential pathways between the bill and decreased health disparities, strength-of-evidence analyses, and citations of empirical evidence refer to the full health impact review: <http://sboh.wa.gov/Portals/7/Doc/HealthImpactReviews/HIR-2014-02-SB6439.pdf>

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