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# 'Let's Stop Bullying' Newsletter

## Burns introduces anti-bullying bills at Capitol rally

*Parents or guardians of kids who bully could face fines, community service*

Parents of school bullies would be on the hook for up to a \$750 fine and possible community service requirement under legislation proposed by Rep. Burns, in an attempt to curb the problem of students taunting and terrorizing their peers.

Rep. Burns discussed his H.B. 2217 at a Capitol news rally in April, saying his action was a direct outgrowth of his tour of schools in the 72<sup>nd</sup> Legislative District to talk about bullying and invite students to sign his anti-bullying pledge.

*"Being taunted, tortured and terrorized by other students is far more prevalent than most people think. When I heard these students' real-life stories, I made up my mind – then and there – to do something about it."*

– Rep. Burns

### Including notification of all parents at every stage, the progressive steps called for under H.B. 2217 are:

- An investigation by the school within five days of a report or claim of bullying or cyber harassment and, if confirmed, notification of the parents or guardians of all students involved and a school-crafted action plan to remedy the situation.
- Upon a second confirmed case within the same academic year, written notice to the parents or guardians to attend a bullying resolution conference with school personnel, the outcome of which would be a written action plan that includes parental participation. This phase also would include a requirement that the parent or guardian attend at least one anti-bullying instructional course and that the student attend an age-appropriate, anti-bullying workshop.
- Upon a third or subsequent act in the same academic year, the school would have to file a citation against the parents or guardian with a magisterial district judge, where they could face a \$500 fine (rising to \$750 for a fourth or subsequent bullying offense), and/or court-mandated community service. Noncompliance could result in up to three days in jail for the parent or guardian.

## Anonymous reporting of Bullying

Two related bills in Rep. Burns' anti-bullying effort are H.B. 2218, which would create an anonymous procedure for someone to report bullying or cyber harassment to the state Education Department and require follow-up investigation, and H.B. 2219, which would require schools to maintain publicly available records of reported incidents of bullying and cyber harassment.

## Hold Schools accountable

Rep. Burns said school administrators who fail to report or follow through on resolving bullying incidents could face punishment by the Education Department, up to and including loss of teaching or principal certifications.



# Burns' anti-bullying proposal spreads like wildfire throughout state, nation, world

Rep. Burns spent much of last year visiting classrooms throughout the 72<sup>nd</sup> Legislative District, with the purpose of talking to students about bullying and getting them to sign my anti-bullying pledge.

So many students spoke openly about how they'd been bullied that it broke his heart — and, more importantly, it drove him to want to do something to help these youngsters escape from being tormented.

His solution was legislation that would hold bullies' parents accountable for tormenting other kids, including a fine of up to \$500 for a third offense — and if they still don't get the message, \$750 for each subsequent bullying offense.

From Johnston to Philadelphia and Pittsburgh; from Washington, D.C., to Biloxi, Mississippi; and from CBS to MSN; Rep. Burns' anti-bullying bills got widespread media attention after they were unveiled. It even got some TV coverage in Australia.

## Rep. Burns' Bullying Legislation as reported by Washington Post, NBC, CBS, ABC, MSN, Go

**Parents.com** A state lawmaker in Pennsylvania is making headlines nationwide for his plans to propose anti-bullying legislation.

**Yahoo7.com Sunrise (Australia TV clip)** "I think it's an outstanding idea because if you think about what we're doing to parental responsibilities, we tend to dump them onto schools and teachers nowadays." — Chris Smith, Radio 2GB and 4BC.

**News.com.au, Australia** A politician in the United States wants to fine parents and require them to perform community service if their children get caught bullying others at school.



**News 12, New Jersey** "A Pennsylvania lawmaker has a plan to cut down on bullying. He wants to punish parents for their child's bad behavior."

**Miami, Channel 7 News** Rep. Frank Burns said this bill would make parents aware of their child's bullying and, if they're repeat offenders, they may get fined.

**The Hill** Burns said no student should ever have to go to school "in fear or shame."

**Philly Voice** Proposed legislation from Pennsylvania state Rep. Frank Burns, D-Cambria, doesn't outline how parents should deal with bullying, and certainly doesn't require them to institute a new exercise routine. However, it would impose penalties on parents whose children are cited for bullying on multiple occasions.

**Columbus, NBC4** In a statement issued Monday, the Democrat says bullying can lead to physical assaults and suicide. He says holding students, parents and officials accountable "is the only way to put an end to this scourge."

**Johnstown, WJAC-TV** In an interview Tuesday with 6 News, Burns talked about his time visiting local schools to discuss bullying with students. He said that students would talk to him about the ways they've been bullied and ask him to do something about it.

**Allentown Morning Call** "If holding parents accountable is what it takes to reel in their kids' bad behavior, then let's do it," said Burns, who is urging other lawmakers to sign onto his legislation.

**Pittsburgh, KDKA Channel 2** A Pennsylvania lawmaker has introduced legislation that could have parents footing the bill if their child bullies another kid at school.

**Mississippi, Biloxi Sun Herald** State Rep. Frank Burns' bill gives parents three strikes. The first time a child bullies someone, the school is required to inform his



# rted by: Good Housekeeping plus many more...

or her parents how the school handled the situation. Parents would have to take a class on bullying and attend a bullying resolution conference the second time. The third time, parents would receive a court citation and pay up to a \$500 fine.



**Harrisburg Patriot-News. commentary** With bullying becoming more widespread and inescapable - thanks to the rise of social media - and students' ostracization often triggering violence in the classroom, Burns wants to head all that off before it gets really bad.

**CBS 21** Burns is taking bullying concerns he's hearing from Pennsylvania students right to the capitol. "They were telling me about how they were bullied and it doesn't stop so I felt other than just the (anti bullying) pledge that I had to do more and that we needed to do something across the state," said Burns who represents Cambria County.

**Reading Eagle** State Rep. Frank Burns says holding students, parents and officials accountable "is the only way to put an end to this scourge."

**Harrisburg, ABC 27** The Democrat says bullying can lead to physical assaults and suicide. "Parents should take an active role in their kids' education, whether he's a bully or not a bully. That's how we achieve great schools," said Burns.

**Good Housekeeping.com** Back in 2016, it was reported that the city council of Shawano, Wisconsin, would fine parents \$366 if their child had bullied another. There was a lot of controversy surrounding that decision in Wisconsin, and we imagine the same will happen if the legislation gets passed in Pennsylvania.

**MSN** "Bullying is underreported and often unaddressed in a meaningful way. When it's not addressed, bullying can escalate quickly from taunts and hurtful online posts to physical assaults and - in worst cases - suicide," Burns said in a statement.

**CBS News** Headline: "Pennsylvania lawmaker Frank Burns proposes fining parents \$500 for child's bullying"

**Toronto Star** It is unclear whether Burns's proposals were prompted by specific incidents of bullying, but his office said he has visited classrooms throughout his district, located east of Pittsburgh, to talk about bullying and urge students to sign an anti-bullying pledge.

**Washington Post** "Parental accountability is a big factor in bullying," Burns said. "A lot of parents refuse to believe that

their son or daughter is bullying people. They want to believe that their kid is great and would not do such a thing." The proposal also covers cyberbullying, which is considered a crime in Pennsylvania.

**Johnstown, WWCP Fox 8** The bill would put other new requirements on school districts. The school will have to report on a monthly basis all bullying that happened within that school to the Department of Education. That information would be included in reports of other types of incidents at Pennsylvania schools that the department already posts online.

**Pittsburgh, WPXI Channel 11** After Brentwood and Sharpsburg passed local anti-bullying ordinances that fine parents of bullies, a state lawmaker is proposing more encompassing legislation ... Channel 11 checked with the police officer who enforces the (Sharpsburg) law and he said it is working as a deterrent. He also said it's raised awareness of how serious bullying is, and the potential consequences.

**Philadelphia, Fox 29** In a statement issued Monday, the Democrat says bullying can lead to physical assaults and suicide.



# Students sign Rep. Burns' anti-bullying pledge



Central Cambria Elementary



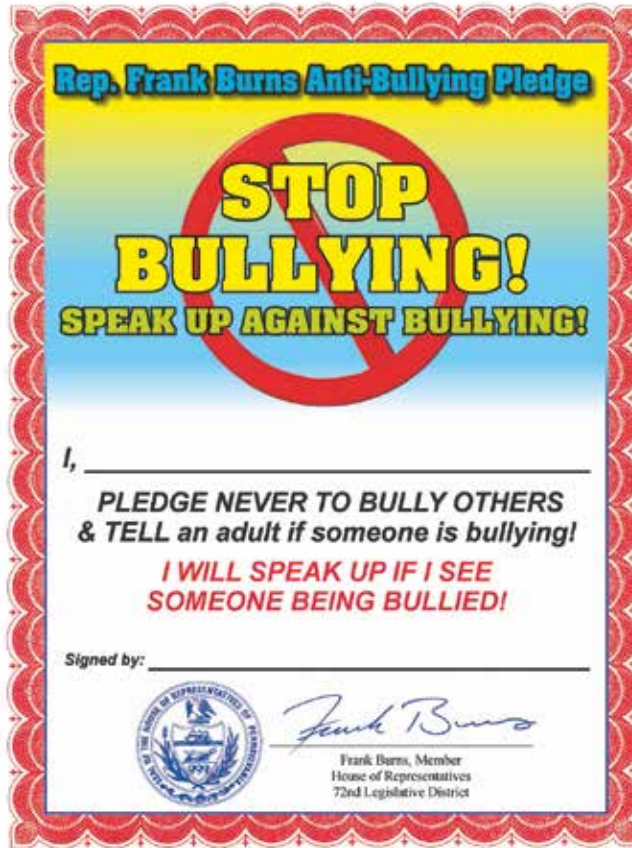
Jackson Township Elementary



Portage 5th-graders



Central Cambria Elementary



Portage 5th-graders



St. Michael 7th-graders



Cambria Heights 5th-graders



St. Michael 8th-graders



All Saints 6th-graders



St. Benedict 7th- and 8th-graders



St. Benedict 3rd- and 4th-graders



All Saints 4th-graders

*“I believe education is a shared responsibility between parents students, teachers and government. We all have a responsibility to the next generation to provide a quality education without fear of being bullied.”*

*— Rep. Frank Burns*

