SENATE EDUCATION
EXHIBIT NO. 3
DATE 1-17-05
BILL NO. SB-198

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I would like to share an experience that illustrates the importance of Montana school district's having policies and procedures for reporting harassment. A student at Polson High School was being harassed by other students because he was perceived to be gay. The student was so distraught by the experience that he felt that his only options were to bring either a gun or an attorney to school. Fortunately, the student happened to see that Polson had a policy and set procedures in place to deal with harassment. With this information in hand, the student consulted his school counselor who in turn made the appropriate referrals and the harassment ended.

This is exactly the purpose of policies. Students need to know where they stand and who will support them when they feel targeted by others. Students can't learn if they do not feel safe. It is our responsibility to ensure that our schools are harassment free. This bill will help schools create clear definitions and procedures that lead to safe learning environments for our youth.

Please give Senate Bill 198 a do pass as written.

Sherry Jones
1-17-05