



everychild.onevoice.®

Montana PTA
PO Box 1269
Laurel, MT 59044-1269
Office Phone: 628-9007
E-mail: ptamontana@rbbmt.org
Website: www.montanapta.org

Montana PTA's Position Statement on SB141

Chartered 95 years ago, Montana PTA is the largest volunteer child advocacy organization in the state of Montana. We represent approximately 6,500 parents and child advocates in local PTA units across our vast state. We are strictly a non-partisan organization whose sole purpose is to promote the welfare of children and youth in schools. Montana PTA's mission statement is: We empower communities to work together for children and families through education, leadership, communication and advocacy. Montana PTA's vision statement is: "Montanan's working together for the future well-being of all children."

Montana PTA recognizes bullying in schools is a pervasive problem that can have negative consequences for the school climate and disrupt the right of students to learn in a safe environment without fear which can have negative lifelong consequences, both for students who bully and their targets.

Bullying is comprised of direct behaviors such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, and stealing that are initiated by one or more students against a target, as well as indirect behaviors such as spreading rumors and acting in other ways to cause a student to be socially isolated through intentional exclusion, with all such behaviors, direct or indirect, amounting to physical or psychological intimidation occurring repeatedly over time to create an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse.

Bullying other children and being the target of bullies are considered risk factors for youth violence by the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and other relevant organizations, and bullies whose behavior goes unchallenged risk ending up as violent adults, engaging in domestic violence and child abuse.

Bullying for too long has gone unchallenged, with parents, who are often unaware of the bullying problem therefore uninformed to talk about it with their children; with students feeling that adult intervention is infrequent and ineffective and will only bring more harassment from bullies; and school personnel not having policies prohibiting bullying, harassment, or intimidation to implement throughout the school year, integrated with the school's curriculum, professional development programs, discipline policies, and other violence prevention efforts.

Those who stand by passively watching or actively encouraging bullying are also affected by these hostile acts; they encourage bullying by creating an audience, they may become desensitized to cruelty, they may learn to imitate bullying behavior and become bullies themselves, and/or they may be fearful for their own safety, adding to their own insecurity.

We are pleased to support state Sen. K. GILLAN, on Senate Bill 141. Please vote yes on Senate Bill 141.

Dee Hensley-Maclean, Montana PTA President