



NJSBA



DATE: December 7, 2020
TO: Members of the Senate Education Committee
FROM: New Jersey School Boards Association
New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association
Garden State Coalition of Schools
New Jersey Association of School Administrators

Re: Support of S-1790 (Pennacchio, Diegnan) with committee amendments

Thank you for the opportunity to express our organizations' collective support for S-1790 with committee amendments, which revises processes required in school district's anti-bullying policies; provides for increased fines and potential civil liability of parent of minors adjudicated delinquent for cyber-harassment or harassment; and contains proactive measures, including the creation of a state level School Climate State Coordinator to serve as a direct resource to parents, students and educators concerning harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB).

Our organizations, representing boards of education, superintendents, and principals wish to thank Senator Pennacchio and Senate staffer Rebecca Panitch for their diligence and willingness to listen to the concerns of stakeholders over the past eighteen months. We share the sponsors' goals and commitment to strengthening our system of response and support when HIB allegations are raised and investigated in our schools. Through many hours of conversation and collaboration, this common sense bill has been drafted that strengthens harassment, intimidation and bullying protections for students and their families while preserving needed flexibility for school staff when responding to HIB incidents.

Among its provisions, this bill:

- Expands the NJDOE policy approach to HIB through data collection to inform local district anti-bullying practices.
- Strengthens HIB complaint procedures and accountability through the use of NJDOE-developed reporting forms to ensure that every incident is promptly filed and tracked to ensure that each is fully addressed.
- Places a renewed emphasis on the importance of focusing on building a supportive school climate and culture to reduce HIB incidents.
- Enhances the dissemination of information about HIB and schools to parents so that both victims and perpetrators receive needed support.

In conclusion, S-1790 will strengthen the standards and procedures for preventing, reporting, investigating, and responding to incidents of harassment, intimidation, and bullying of students that occur in school, off school premises and in cyberspace. Through these amendments, schools will gain improved tools to address student health and safety, leading to greater student achievement overall.

For these reasons, our organizations respectfully urge the Senate Education Committee to approve S-1790. Thank you for your consideration of our collective position on this legislation.