June 9. 2022

**Position Statement**

**Expressing Concerns**

**A-1841 (Lampitt)**

 **Revises definition of "harassment, intimidation or bullying" under "Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act."**

The New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA), a federation of all of the district boards of education in the state, believes that local boards of education should provide conditions and establish policies that will ensure the health and safety of students.. Additionally, the NJSBA believes the authority for management of public schools should rest with local boards of education and State authority over school districts should not exceed the scope necessary to fulfill the constitutional mandate for a thorough and efficient system of free public education.

The NJSBA is concerned about the effect that the enlargement of the definition of harassment, intimidation or bullying will have on the schools and the students that they serve. These concerns include:

* Will an expanded definition of HIB achieve the legislative intent to keep students safe?
* Will schools need to add personnel to handle an increased number of HIB filings?
* Does the need for an expanded HIB definition mean that the remainder of a district’s code of student conduct will also have to be strengthened?

Recently, the Governor enacted P.L. 2021, c. 338 that revises and updates many aspects of New Jersey’s Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act. Many of these changes will take effect in July 2022. While the definition was not changed, there are several other changes designed to increase transparency and accountability for school districts while enhancing services for parents and students.

NJSBA, along with many other stakeholders, worked with the sponsors of P.L. 2021 c. 338 to construct a bill that increases protections for students, expanded services for parents and improves school climates statewide. NJSBA is committed to engaging in a similar collaborative process as A-1841 moves through the legislature.