

**Florida's Students Deserve  
Safe, Harassment-free  
Learning Environments.**

- ✓ Give them your support by signing on to co-sponsor the Student Safety & Campus Violence Prevention Act.

**For more information,  
contact the Dignity for  
All Students Coalition  
at 813-870-3735.**




- i Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 2004  
ii The 2003 National Center for Education Statistics Report on School Violence  
iii Journal of the American Medical Association, 2001.  
iv *ibid.*  
v National Institute of Health, April 2001

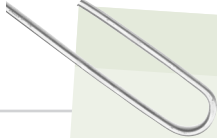
Florida's Students Deserve Safe Schools

- Support the -

**Students Safety &  
Campus Violence  
Prevention Act**

The Student Safety Act is legislation that, if enacted, would:

-  Prohibit discrimination and harassment in Florida's schools including, but not limited to, incidents motivated on the basis of real or perceived identification or expression of characteristics already included in Florida law.
-  Train administrators and teachers on how to address harassment and discrimination when they occur and discussion of discrimination and bias-related harassment in character education curriculum for students.
-  Survey school climates around the state to ensure the remedies are effective and to discover where the needs are most profound.




**Florida's students need a SAFE environment in which to LEARN**

### Why is the Student Safety bill necessary?

Numerous studies have documented the alarming prevalence of violence, harassment and bullying in schools:

- 14,153 - the number of violent acts occurring in Florida's schools during the 1998-1999 school year. <sup>i</sup>
- 60% - the increase in bullying reported nationally by students between 1999 and 2001. <sup>ii</sup>
- 2x - School homicide perpetrators are twice as likely to have been victims of bullies compared to homicide victims <sup>iii</sup>
- 30% of all students in grades 6 to 10 are involved in moderate to frequent bullying, as perpetrator, victim or both. <sup>iv</sup>



**Teachers need to be trained to effectively intervene in incidents of harassment and violence.**

Aren't students already protected from harassment by the law?

**No.** While a few localities have passed anti-discrimination and harassment policies for their schools, there is no statewide protection from harassment in schools under Florida state law.

**States with Similar Legislation**

- New Jersey
- Vermont
- Connecticut
- Massachusetts
- Minnesota
- California
- Wisconsin
- Washington DC

### What is the effect of in-school harassment on students?

- Numerous studies have shown that, unchecked, school-based harassment leads to poor attendance, decreased academic performance and an increase in high-risk behavior for both the bully and his victim.
- Additionally, because they feel unsafe, victimized youth are pushed out of schools and into high-risk behavior.
- 8% of all students miss 1 day of school each month because they fear for their safety on school grounds.<sup>v</sup>
- These students are also at an increased risk for substance abuse, dropping out of school, homelessness and suicide.

### Why shouldn't school violence be handled by local school districts?

Passing this bill is not inconsistent with supporting the rights of local school boards to set their own policies. The bill simply sets minimum standards that each school district will be responsible for enforcing. The specifics of the teacher training and character education will be left for each county to devise in cooperation with the Department of Education and the State Board of Education.

Legislation passed in recent sessions has shown that on important safety issues, the Legislature has seen fit to take the lead in setting standards that assure the basic welfare of all students. There is both precedent and good reason for the Legislature to once again provide individual school districts with the leadership and firm guidelines needed in order to ensure the safety and well being of all of Florida's students.