



Bully Free Iowa Act of 2015

The Bully Free Iowa Act of 2015 would give Iowa students, parents and schools better tools to address bullying and cyberbullying because all children deserve to feel safe and respected at school. No youngster should dread going to class because they feel threatened, or wonder who will help them. Yet bullying remains a pervasive problem, with its reach expanded by text messaging and social networking.

The legislation strengthens our commitment to address cyberbullying by explicitly including “social networking sites” in the definition of electronic and stating that schools have authority to address bullying that occur off school grounds. This sends a clear message that cyberbullying won’t be tolerated.

To protect their children, parents must be empowered with information. Tragic incidents – even suicides – have occurred in Iowa and other states where parents didn’t realize the extent of the problem. The Bully Free Iowa Act of 2015 would require parental notification, with an exception if a school administrator or student reasonably believes it could lead to rejection, neglect or abuse.

Investigating complaints of bullying and harassment both at school and away from school can be challenging. Training in how to conduct such investigations will be offered to all Iowa school districts to assure that they are prepared to address this pervasive problem.

A pilot program in at least two middle schools and two high schools will empower students to know how to stand up for classmates who face being bullied or harassed. Providing more opportunities for student leadership is a crucial step toward doing more to prevent bullying and harassment.

“Iowa common sense tells us that every child in Iowa deserves to go to school each and every day in a safe and respectful learning environment. They deserve a classroom and community that allows them to grow and flourish, not live in fear of when and where the bully will strike again. This is the year that we stand up to the bully. We can’t wait any longer.”

– Iowa Governor Terry E. Branstad ,
2015 Condition of the State, Jan. 13,
2015