



REPRESENTATIVE MIA COSTELLO
Member, House Finance Committee

Sponsor Statement
House Bill 45

"An Act relating to harassment, intimidation, or bullying by students attending a public school in the state"

House Bill 45 requires Alaskan school districts to develop a policy against electronic bullying, commonly known as "cyberbullying". Cyberbullying is a type of harassment conducted through any electronic means. This may occur during school hours or at school-sponsored events, off of school property or outside of a school-sponsored activity.

The rates of cyberbullying and electronic victimization have varied over the years in which the age of people using electronic devices has lowered. Anywhere from 15-35 percent of teens have experienced some form of cyberbullying. While traditional bullying is still more common than cyberbullying, the latter has become more prevalent amongst teens because they can fearlessly harass people, in many cases by hiding their identity. Youth have been misusing technology, especially in terms of cyberbullying and social networking. Since proof of this type of harassment exists only in the virtual world, these youth ultimately think of themselves as blameless. This law would remind educators and administrators of our school districts that the virtual realm is a part of daily life that we should teach our children how to safely and respectfully interact within.

Currently, 18 states include "cyberbullying" in their bullying laws. Also, five other states have anti-cyberbullying laws pending. Wisconsin, Montana, and Alaska are the only states which do not include "electronic harassment" in their bullying laws.

This bill was suggested by a Dimond High School senior. Our students deserve to learn and grow without threats to their well-being, whether they come from the real or virtual world. Schools should be an environment where students can expect safety from their leaders and kindness from their peers. This bill helps to ensure that.

I ask for your support with HB 45.

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