

Committee on Education

CS/CS/HB 609 — Bullying in the Public School System

by Education Committee; K-12 Subcommittee; Reps. Fullwood, Campbell, and others (CS/SB 626 by Education Committee; Senator Bullard)

The bill amends the definition of bullying to include cyberbullying, and establishes new prohibitions for any technology-related activities that adversely affect the ability of a student to receive an education or that disrupt the orderly operation of school.

The bill defines cyberbullying as bullying through the use of:

- Specified technology or electronic communications;
- The creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator;
- Assumes the identity of another person; or
- Knowingly impersonates another person; or
- The distribution of an electronic communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that is accessible to others.

The bill prohibits bullying or harassment through the use of data or computer software that is accessed at a nonschool-related location, activity, function, or program or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, if it:

- Substantially interferes with or limits the victim's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or opportunities offered by a school; or
- Substantially disrupts the education process or orderly operation of a school.

Current law prohibits bullying or harassment through the use of data or computer software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, or computer network of a public K-12 educational institution. The bill expands current law to prohibit the bullying or harassment of any public K-12 student or employee:

- During a public K-12 education program or activity;
- During a school-related or school-sponsored program or activity;
- On a public K-12 school bus; or
- Through a computer, computer system, or computer network that, regardless of ownership, is:
- Physically located on school property; or
- At school-related or school-sponsored programs or activities.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2013.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 118-0