

Honorable Representatives,

Unfortunately, I cannot be with you in person today because I am sick with the flu. I did however want to offer testimony in support of House Bill 360, which requires schools in Ohio to take note of, report and remedy bullying in schools. Values-in-Action is an Ohio-based nonprofit organization with almost 25 years of experience in over 300 schools annually, training elementary, middle and high school students to decrease bullying, increase values and BE KIND. We know schools and school-related issues.

This bill is important because many schools are not doing the job to deal with bullying in a serious and systematic way. There are several reasons. First of all, although bullying often starts in school, it can take on a life of its own outside of school as students are cyber-bullied. Second, many teachers feel powerless to deal with bullying, and many teachers do not notice bullying. It is estimated that 70% of bullying is either unreported or unnoticed by teachers. Third, many schools — especially independent schools that rely on tuition and parental donations — do not want to deal with the bully whose parents are prominent in the community or major donors. Fourth, many schools do not want the negative PR. They do not want to admit that there is a problem, and they want to shape a false narrative that bullying is not an issue in their school. Bullying is an issue in EVERY school.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, twenty percent of 9th-12th graders are bullied every year. We have seen our share of teen suicides in Ohio that stem from bullying. And, in many (but certainly not all cases) school shootings have been one of the outcomes of bullying. Some students who have been bullied will retreat into themselves, some will lash out against others, and some will be affected for life.

We cannot be vigilant enough with our public policy against bullying. Notwithstanding the obvious toll on our kids, bullies will likely bully in the workplace, as well.

The world has changed. Bullying, school shootings and teen suicides are facts of life today. We cannot legislate morality, moral development, values or how parents parent. However, we can and should legislate and regulate behavior within the only public square we have left in every community in Ohio; that is, within our schools.

Please support House Bill 360.

Respectfully submitted,

Stuart Muszynski
President and CEO
Values-in-Action Foundation

C-216-650-0463

6700 Beta Drive, Suite 120
Mayfield Village, OH 44143

