

To the committee:

First I want to start by saying thank you for realizing this is a serious issue.

To understand my story I have to introduce you to my son. Coby Alen Bleakney was a happy 6th grader with his entire life ahead of him. He received straight A's until the last nine weeks of his life. Coby was what we call a old soul. He was always concerned with other peoples feelings and wanted to make the world a better place. My son wasn't the sports type at all. He enjoyed his games and his family the most. His goal in life was to be a surgeon. He was just 70lbs 4'9" tall, blonde hair, blue eyed bundle of love.

We experienced some teasing and tormenting in previous years the school handled our complaints and the issues were resolved. Then the 6 grade began. Coby came home and told us he was being picked on again. We went to the school, called the school. Eventually we pulled him out and placed him in a alternative school. This didn't fit with Coby. So we went back to the original school and felt we could take their word that the situation will be monitored and resolved. From this point Coby never shared with us what was really going on.

My son had 5 bullies and a teacher that taunted him. We have since found proof and have witnesses to verbal attacks, physical attacks and social media attacks. I can not accurately tell you why my son was targeted. I do know at least two of the bullies were transfer students because they were expelled from other local schools for bullying. 3 of the bullies are related. These children were known for looking for trouble. They had pushed my son to the point that he couldn't take it anymore March 22, 2018 3 minutes before the bus was to arrive at our home to take him to school Coby ended his life. The apologizes will never bring my son home again. My son was only 12 years old.

Over 160,000 kids skip school daily due to bullying. Over 460,000 suicide attempts by our youth yearly. On average 10% are successful. In the state of Ohio alone we lost 42 youth as of July 31st.

I also have formed a non-profit Team Coby. We are a anti-bullying, anti-suicide awareness, education and support group. We are also affiliated with a group in Stark

County. We also work with a 1-800 stop bullying hotline based out of Pennsylvania. The calls that we take are in extreme numbers. I will say that at times the word bullying is over used. I am also one that will say I would rather investigate and research a case to find it isn't bullying than to miss a child's real fear.

We locally lost another young man last week a 13 year old to suicide from bullying. We are losing a generation.

The bullies in our case have had zero accountability. They have went on to bully others. These same bullies have verbal attacked me and Cobys father in public. We were sent a very offensive message by a bully on his birthday this year. When there is no accountability they do not stop. They get more confident and more aggressive in their attacks.

Bullying has always been around I agree. Yet now they have taken a very new look. This kids are telling our kids to kill themselves, that they are a waste of space, that they shouldn't be here. If 5 people told you this on a daily basis how would you feel. Then when my son went to the restroom he was physically attacked. Being told how to kill themselves sending them videos of how to do it. Then being taunted because they have not done it. In times before the kids could go home and build themselves back up. Now the social media follows them home and they do not get a break. Before if you had a issue with someone you may have a few people involved. Social media involves so many more into the situation. Fear of their own attacks silents many people. They are scared that they will become a victim. Our society has swept this issue under the rug for to long. Today 1 in 3 people have been a victim of bullying. There is nothing stopping these bullies from continuing their assaults. No consequences means we are breeding more aggressive bullies. If they continue to do these attacks how many more children do we have to lose.

The people who say we are making a bigger deal out of it imagine visiting your 12 year old sons grave. Our family has paid dearly for bullying. It is more important when you live it.

So I want to personally thank you for making them accountable. Maybe it will defer them from their next attack. Every child matters. Every child has a purpose. You are in a position to let every child know that this will not be tolerated.

Thank you,

Tammy Bleakney /Cobys mom forever 12