

To: The State of Ohio Judiciary Committee,

I am writing you in reference to the **Senate Bill (SB) 144- To create the offense of aggravated bullying, a third degree misdemeanor.**

On December 11, 2014, my daughter's best friend, Emilie Olsen committed suicide at the young age of 13 years old. Emilie committed suicide in order to end the extreme pain and torture she received at the hands of her classmates at Fairfield Middle School in Fairfield Ohio. Emilie, was an orphan who was adopted from China to her American family as an infant and was relentlessly bullied for a couple years by a group of her fellow classmates. The bullying was constant, verbal and physical, AND witnessed on many occasions by several teachers, school administrators, and other school staff members. The bullying was reported many times to school administration by fellow students, Emilie's parents, my wife and I, my daughter and Emilie herself. Bully report forms were filled out, but the bullying continued without interruption.

There were many incidents of bullying committed right in front of staff members. Once such incident was when 2 fellow male classmates of Emilie's confronted her in the hallway. One of the boys put his hands around Emilie's throat as if to choke her and slammed her up against some lockers and called her a "Fat Chinese Whore". Another incident happened in the cafeteria, again witnessed by teachers and staff members, where Emilie was confronted by a group of students that placed a razor blade on the table in front of her and said **"Go kill yourself and get it over with, we don't want you here anymore"** There are many, many more similar incidents like this that Emilie endured over the course of a couple years. This is not to mention the cyber bullying over social media that in many cases was way worse and never ending even over the summer months when school was out for summer. Most of these incidents were not reported to Emilie's parents by school officials. Emilie did not report them to her parents either as she was beginning to "shut down" emotionally. Emilie killed herself on December 11, 2014 upon returning home from school at the end of the day, ending the pain she endured for so long. My daughter sat next to Emilie on the bus ride home from school that day and reported to me later that Emilie seemed happier on that ride home than she had been for quite a long time. Little did my daughter know that she was to be the last person to see or speak to Emilie alive. We all now know that Emilie was happy because SHE knew her pain was about to come to an end. Fifteen minutes after my daughter said goodbye to Emilie her pain ended forever. The pain for all of us who knew and loved Emilie was just beginning and will never come to an end.

You may ask why such open bullying abuse was seemingly allowed to persist for so long as to cause a beautiful young lady to take her own life...

Well, as it turns out, the group of kids who were bullying Emilie were led by a child who was the child of one of the highest-ranking administrators in the school district. Emails, that I have actually seen, between staff members detail that staff members actually witnessed many of these incidents but no action was taken because these staff members did not want to entertain the idea of disciplining the child of the person who can terminate their employment. Therefore, the severe bullying was met with a blind eye from all school administrators up to and including the school Principal. After Emilie's death, her parents were met beside her coffin at her funeral by several staff members who urged the Olsen's to start asking questions of the school district and not to stop until they learn the truth as to why their daughter took her own life.....This was the first indication that Emilie's parents had that there was more to her suicide than they knew at that time. You can only imagine the horror they felt during her funeral, having been informed this way that something more sinister was to be blamed for their daughter's death. The Olsen's filed a federal law suit that to this day is still stalled in the court system. Their hell continues to this day, 5 years after their daughter took her own life by a suicide that was extremely preventable had administrators at Fairfield City School District acted appropriately.

I copied the exact text below of the Fairfield City School District definition of the Bullying and Harassment Policy from the school District's web site.

"Our policy states, "Bullying, harassment and intimidation is an intentional written, verbal, electronic or physical act that a student has exhibited toward another particular student more than once. The intentional act also includes violence within a dating relationship. The behavior causes mental or physical harm to the other student and is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment for the other student. This behavior is prohibited on school property, on a school bus or at a school-sponsored activity. Students found responsible for harassment, intimidation or bullying by an electronic act may be suspended."

https://www.fairfieldcityschools.com/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=200840&type=d&pREC_ID=435587

The part of this policy that I want to point out is **"Bullying, harassment and intimidation is an intentional written, verbal, electronic or physical act that a student has exhibited toward another particular student **more than once**".**

The average Middle School student is pretty smart. It does not take long for a group of 10 students to realize that if they want to grind a particular kid into the ground and get away with it without getting severely punished for "Bullying" that there is a very simple way around this. All they have to do is to have each person in the group push her down the steps, trip her in the hallway, dump her backpack out or slam her up against the lockers **one time each**. By their definition this is not bullying because no kid pushed her down more than one time. If they wanted to, they could have had all 900 kids in the 7th grade take one turn pushing her down and it would still not be considered bullying!!! Pushing a kid down in the hall way one time would be met with a minor verbal reprimand and that student can be on their way....

The year following Emilie's suicide, my daughter found herself in the sights of the "leader of the pack" and that child's best friend. My daughter, also a Chinese adoptee, received a severe concussion at the hands of the child's best friend as she was knocked to the gym floor, hitting her head. This happened right in front of a teacher who did nothing to offer my daughter medical attention or even send her to the nurse to be looked at. She returned home on the bus stating to us that she cannot remember the second half of the school day and has a severe headache. We took her to the hospital where she was diagnosed with a head injury. After a lot of prodding at the school we discovered that again nobody was interested in issuing discipline because the child who caused this was best friends with the high-ranking administrator's child and his family is close personal friends with the administrator's family. Therefore, once again a blind eye was turned and nothing happened. Furthermore, we were told that this is not bullying because he only gave her a head injury **one time!!**

The bullying laws need to be changed so that people can no longer "hide" behind the law itself. This system is broken and the loopholes need to be closed or this problem will not go away. It is a travesty that we are losing so many of our young bright and beautiful children because the bullying laws lack the necessary force to discourage kids from targeting someone as they did with Emilie.

I beg you to please fix this law. The future of so many children are depending on you to take action now.

Regards,

Raymond D. Schmitz