

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 12, 2016

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 17, 2016

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2015–16 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2845

Introduced by Assembly Member Williams

February 19, 2016

An act to amend ~~Section~~ *Sections 234.1 and 234.5* of the Education Code, relating to school safety.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2845, as amended, Williams. School safety: Safe Place to Learn Act.

Existing law establishes the system of public elementary and secondary schools in this state, and provides for the establishment of local educational agencies to operate these schools and provide instruction to pupils. Existing law states the policy of the State of California to afford all persons in public schools, regardless of their disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other specified characteristic, equal rights and opportunities in the educational institutions of the state. Existing law, the Safe Place to Learn Act, requires the State Department of Education, as part of its regular monitoring and review of a local educational agency, to assess whether the local educational agency has, among other things, adopted a policy that prohibits discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying, as specified, and has publicized that policy to pupils, parents, employees, agents of the governing board, and the general public.

Existing law also requires the ~~State Department of Education department~~ to assess whether the local educational agency has provided to certificated schoolsite employees who serve pupils in any of grades 7 to 12, inclusive, information on existing schoolsite and community resources related to the support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning pupils, as specified.

This bill would express legislative findings and declarations relating to pupils who are subject to verbal, physical, and online harassment. The bill would add the support of *pupils who face bias or bullying, including Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, Sikh, and South Asian pupils* ~~or the support of other pupils who may face bias or bullying to the matters the State Department of Education is required to assess with respect to local educational agencies, as referenced above.~~ *pupils.*

Existing law requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to post, and annually update, on the department’s Internet Web site and provide to each school district a list of statewide resources, including community-based organizations, that provide support to youth who have been subjected to school-based discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying, and their families.

This bill would instead provide that that list include statewide resources, including community-based organizations, that provide support to youth who have been subjected to school-based discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying, including based on affiliation, or perceived affiliation, with any religious group, including Muslim, and their families.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the
- 2 following:
- 3 (1) All pupils deserve and need safe and supportive school
- 4 environments in which to learn.
- 5 (2) Pupils who are Muslim, Sikh, or of South Asian descent,
- 6 often face verbal, physical, or online harassment, all of which have
- 7 significant effects on their academic achievement and mental
- 8 health.

1 (3) Recent reports indicate that more than half of Muslim and
2 Sikh pupils in California report that they have faced verbal threats
3 or insults, cyberbullying, or physical assaults.

4 (4) The federal government has recognized the harm that is
5 caused by such bullying, and has called upon Muslim parents to
6 contact the United States Department of Justice or the United States
7 Department of Education if their children are bullied at school.
8 The White House has initiated the Asian American and Pacific
9 Islander Bullying Prevention Task Force in response to concerns
10 about the bullying of Muslim, Sikh, and Asian American pupils.

11 (5) Multiple studies demonstrate that pupils who face bullying
12 suffer academically. Bullying is also linked to negative outcomes,
13 including impacts on mental health, substance use, and suicide.

14 (6) Research demonstrates that Muslim, Sikh, and other pupils
15 who face hate-based bias and bullying in school do not report these
16 incidents to school staff, primarily because they believe that school
17 staff are not trained to address these issues.

18 (7) Creating supportive learning environments improves pupil
19 performance.

20 (8) The United States Department of Education provides
21 numerous resources for schools to support pupils who are facing
22 bullying due to their religion, race, or national origin. These
23 resources were highlighted in an open letter dated December 31,
24 2015, and sent by the United States Secretary of Education to
25 education administrators throughout the nation.

26 (b) The Legislature therefore encourages school districts, county
27 offices of education, and charter schools to provide information
28 on existing schoolsite and community resources to educate
29 teachers, administrators, and other school staff on the support of
30 Muslim, Sikh, and other pupils who may face anti-Muslim bias
31 and bullying, as required by subdivision (d) of Section 234.1 of
32 the Education Code.

33 SEC. 2. Section 234.1 of the Education Code is amended to
34 read:

35 234.1. The department, pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section
36 64001, shall monitor adherence to the requirements of Chapter 5.3
37 (commencing with Section 4900) of Division 1 of Title 5 of the
38 California Code of Regulations and this chapter as part of its
39 regular monitoring and review of local educational agencies,
40 commonly known as the Categorical Program Monitoring process.

1 The department shall assess whether local educational agencies
2 have done all of the following:

3 (a) Adopted a policy that prohibits discrimination, harassment,
4 intimidation, and bullying based on the actual or perceived
5 characteristics set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code and
6 Section 220 of this code, and disability, gender, gender identity,
7 gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual
8 orientation, or association with a person or group with one or more
9 of these actual or perceived characteristics. The policy shall include
10 a statement that the policy applies to all acts related to school
11 activity or school attendance occurring within a school under the
12 jurisdiction of the superintendent of the school district.

13 (b) Adopted a process for receiving and investigating complaints
14 of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying based
15 on any of the actual or perceived characteristics set forth in Section
16 422.55 of the Penal Code and Section 220 of this code, and
17 disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality,
18 race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or association with
19 a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived
20 characteristics. The complaint process shall include, but not be
21 limited to, all of the following:

22 (1) A requirement that, if school personnel witness an act of
23 discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying, they shall
24 take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so.

25 (2) A timeline to investigate and resolve complaints of
26 discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying that shall be
27 followed by all schools under the jurisdiction of the school district.

28 (3) An appeal process afforded to the complainant should he or
29 she disagree with the resolution of a complaint filed pursuant to
30 this section.

31 (4) All forms developed pursuant to this process shall be
32 translated pursuant to Section 48985.

33 (c) Publicized antidiscrimination, antiharassment,
34 anti-intimidation, and antibullying policies adopted pursuant to
35 subdivision (a), including information about the manner in which
36 to file a complaint, to pupils, parents, employees, agents of the
37 governing board, and the general public. The information shall be
38 translated pursuant to Section 48985.

39 (d) (1) Provided, incident to the publicizing described in
40 subdivision (c), to certificated schoolsite employees who serve

1 pupils in any of grades 7 to 12, inclusive, who are employed by
2 the local educational agency, information on existing schoolsite
3 and community resources related to the support of lesbian, gay,
4 bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) pupils, or related
5 to the support of *pupils who may face bias or bullying, including*
6 Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, Sikh, and South Asian ~~pupils or~~
7 ~~the support of other pupils who may face bias or bullying.~~ *pupils.*

8 (2) As used in this subdivision, both of the following apply:

9 (A) Schoolsite resources may include, but are not limited to,
10 peer support or affinity clubs and organizations, safe spaces for
11 LGBTQ or other at-risk pupils, counseling services, staff who have
12 received antibias or other training aimed at supporting these pupils
13 or who serve as designated support to these pupils, health and other
14 curriculum materials that are inclusive of, and relevant to, these
15 pupils, online training developed pursuant to Section 32283.5, and
16 other policies adopted pursuant to this article, including related
17 complaint procedures.

18 (B) Community resources may include, but are not limited to,
19 community-based organizations that provide support to LGBTQ
20 or other at-risk pupils and their families, and physical and mental
21 health providers with experience or training in treating or
22 supporting these pupils.

23 (e) Posted the policy established pursuant to subdivision (a) in
24 all schools and offices, including staff lounges and pupil
25 government meeting rooms.

26 (f) Maintained documentation of complaints and their resolution
27 for a minimum of one review cycle.

28 (g) Ensured that complainants are protected from retaliation
29 and that the identity of a complainant alleging discrimination,
30 harassment, intimidation, or bullying remains confidential, as
31 appropriate.

32 (h) Identified a responsible local educational agency officer for
33 ensuring school district or county office of education compliance
34 with the requirements of Chapter 5.3 (commencing with Section
35 4900) of Division 1 of Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations
36 and this chapter.

37 *SEC. 3. Section 234.5 of the Education Code is amended to*
38 *read:*

39 234.5. (a) The Superintendent shall post, and annually update,
40 on the department's Internet Web site and provide to each school

1 district a list of statewide resources, including community-based
2 organizations, that provide support to youth who have been
3 subjected to school-based discrimination, harassment, intimidation,
4 or bullying, *including based on affiliation, or perceived affiliation,*
5 *with any religious group, including Muslim,* and their families.
6 ~~The~~
7 (b) *The* department's Internet Web site shall also include a list
8 of statewide resources for youth who have been affected by gangs,
9 gun violence, and psychological trauma caused by violence at
10 home, at school, and in the community.