

March 30, 2026

BILL: HB 14 – County Boards of Education – Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation – Information Collection and Reporting Requirements

RE: Written Testimony in Support of HB 14

Dear Chair and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

I am writing to express my **strong support for HB 14**. This bill is critically important because the current measures in place within school districts to address bullying, harassment, and student safety are not sufficient to ensure consistent protection for all students.

While policies may exist on paper, the implementation of safety plans and follow-up procedures is often inconsistent. In many cases, there is a lack of meaningful follow-up after incidents are reported, failure to adequately implement safety plans, and insufficient communication with parents. Parents are not always included in the development of safety plans, despite being essential partners in ensuring student safety and well-being. Without consistent follow-up and accountability, safety plans become procedural documents rather than effective tools for protecting students.

When bullying and harassment are not adequately addressed, the impact extends beyond the immediate incident and significantly affects a student's psychological safety. Students who do not feel psychologically safe at school often experience increased anxiety, fear, school avoidance, decreased academic performance, and difficulty concentrating. Over time, repeated exposure to bullying without effective intervention can lead to emotional distress, loss of trust in adults, and a belief that the school environment is not safe or supportive. A student cannot fully access their education if they do not feel safe enough to learn.

This issue is particularly concerning for students with disabilities. Children with disabilities are at greater risk for bullying and harassment due to their differences, social challenges, behavioral differences, or learning needs. Despite this increased risk, there are often no additional safeguards in place to protect these students, and bullying can sometimes be misinterpreted as behavior problems rather than a safety concern. When this happens, the student who is being bullied may be disciplined

rather than protected, which further compounds the harm and further damages the student's psychological safety and trust in the school system.

HB 14 represents an important step toward strengthening accountability, improving follow-up procedures, ensuring parent involvement in safety planning, and requiring schools to take bullying and harassment seriously as a student safety issue. This bill helps ensure that safety plans are not only created, but implemented, monitored, and revised as needed, with appropriate oversight and parent involvement.

All students deserve to feel safe at school, both physically and psychologically. No child should have to endure bullying or harassment without meaningful intervention and protection from the adults responsible for their care and education. HB 14 helps move us closer to a system where student safety is treated as a priority and where schools are held accountable for protecting vulnerable students.

For these reasons, **I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 14.**

Respectfully submitted,

Eboni Burch, Psy.D.