



SB23-296 Prevent Harassment And Discrimination In Schools

- *Sponsors: Sen. Faith Winter (D), Sen. Janice Marchman (D); Rep. Jennifer Bacon (D), Rep. Leslie Herod (D)*
 - *Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days following adjournment of the General Assembly sine die, assuming no referendum petition is filed.*
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Overview

The bill requires that public schools adopt a formal policy protecting students from harassment or discrimination, train staff annually, and collect and pass data on reported incidents to school districts and the state.

Reporting Mechanisms: The bill directs public schools to accept reports of harassment or discrimination through various channels. This includes accepting reports in writing, in person, by phone, email, or online.

Notice Requirements: Public schools are required to post notices in multiple locations within their premises to inform students about the procedures for reporting harassment or discrimination. These notices serve to raise awareness among students and provide them with information on how to report such incidents.

Investigation Procedures: The bill calls for public schools to adopt procedures for investigating reports of harassment or discrimination. These procedures outline the steps to be taken when handling such reports and ensure appropriate actions are taken to address and resolve the issues.

Retention of Case Files: Public schools must retain the case files related to harassment or discrimination reports for a period of seven years. This requirement ensures that records are maintained for future reference or potential follow-up actions.

Accommodations and Supportive Measures: The bill mandates that schools provide accommodations and supportive measures to students who experience harassment or discrimination. These measures can include counseling services, extended time for homework or tests, modified class schedules, or other forms of support that aim to assist affected students and mitigate the impact of the incidents.

Excused Absence: The bill requires schools to grant excused absences to students who are facing harassment or discrimination. This provision acknowledges the potential impact such incidents can have on a student's well-being. It recognizes their need for time away from school to address the issue or seek the necessary support.

School Impact

Under the new legislation, public schools and districts will experience a rise in operational demands and financial commitments associated with establishing a comprehensive reporting policy for addressing harassment and discrimination, conducting regular staff training sessions, and gathering data on reported incidents. Additionally, expenses will increase for conducting investigations into reported cases and reporting such incidents to the school districts and relevant educational authorities like the CDE (Colorado Department of Education).