

# Senate Education Committee

*Ryan Meleedy 271-4151*

**HB 108**, relative to bullying and cyberbullying across multiple school districts.

**Hearing Date:** April 15, 2025

**Members of the Committee Present:** Senators Ward, Sullivan, Abbas, Prentiss and Altschiller

**Members of the Committee Absent :** None

**Bill Analysis:** This bill clarifies which district is responsible for investigating cases of bullying or cyberbullying that occurred across multiple school districts.

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**Sponsors:**

Rep. McDonnell

Rep. Cambrils

Rep. Dunn

Rep. Kuttub

Rep. Panek

Rep. Perez

Rep. Cordelli

Rep. Ladd

Sen. Innis

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**Who supports the bill:** Representative Valerie McDonnell, Representative Peggy Balboni, Representative Glenn Cordelli, Abigail Meyer, Eric Pauer, Christine Falcone, Janet Altobello, Craig Altobello, Jocelyn Duffy, Kathryn Schongar, Jacqueline Van Allen, Suzanne Haldan, Vernon Hyman, Representative James Thibault.

**Who opposes the bill:** Emily York, Tammy D'Agostino, Kimberlee Braught, Mary Jenkins, Adriane Robbins, Terry Curtis.

**Who is neutral on the bill:** No one signed in neutrality to this bill.

**Summary of testimony presented in support:**

**Representative Valerie McDonnell**

- Representative McDonnell testified in support of her prime-sponsored bill, House Bill 108.
- She explained to the committee that bullying is a complicated issue to address because it's hard to pass legislation mandating kindness, and bullying has been ingrained in the human experience since humanity's beginning.
- She stated that bullying can only be remedied by being properly addressed when it occurs, and it is the duty of the legislature to address it. She added that bullying is a leading cause of self-harm and suicide for young people.

- She posited that the problem is significantly increased with the use of modern technology, which prompted cyberbullying's inclusion in the bill.
- She explained that, in cases of bullying that crosses state lines, the bill would require the principal of the first New Hampshire district to hear about the incident to contact the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office.
- She established that the bill was developed in collaboration with the Attorney General's Office, the New Hampshire School Board's Association, and the New Hampshire School Administrators' Association. She emphasized that the bill has garnered significant bipartisan support in the House.
- Representative McDonnell concluded her opening testimony by stating that the bill does not have any fiscal impact.
- Senator Altschiller asked how cyberbullying would be approached if it reached a larger number of locations, focusing specifically on how law enforcement would be asked to address this. Representative McDonnell explained that the Attorney General's Office would be responsible for determining whether local authorities should be contacted. She also added that "principal or designee" was added to give schools some level of discretion for handling these instances. She explained that the goal of this bill is to establish who is responsible for addressing these instances of bullying, so that it is clear.
- Senator Altschiller asked how a principal or designee would make the decision of whether to call authorities over an incident of bullying, explaining that when a crime has been alleged, the reporting act is immediately triggered. Representative McDonnell explained that, in most schools, the designee would be the school resource officer, who is already familiar with criminal proceedings. She explained that there would likely be incidents that would be referred from the Attorney General's Office to the Human Rights Commission, furthering that not all instances would fall under criminal jurisdiction.
- Senator Altschiller asked what the definition of "first district" is, in reference to the bill's language. Representative McDonnell explained that it refers to the first district to become aware of the incident. She elaborated, saying that if a school feels that they are the first to hear about an incident, even if another school district was the first, they should still be reporting it.

### **Representative Peggy Balboni**

- Representative Balboni testified in support of the bill, explaining that it truly was a bipartisan collaborative effort.
- She added that if the committee sees potential improvements to the bill, they should make them.