

Chair Glenn Cordelli  
House Education Policy and Administration Committee  
New Hampshire House of Representatives

Dear Chair Cordelli and Members of the Committee,

### **Re: Concerns Regarding HB 131 and the Importance of MTSS-B in Bullying Prevention**

We, the district wellness and counseling coordinators representing a regional working group serving approximately **10,000 students** and their families, respectfully submit our concerns regarding House Bill 131. While accountability and consequences for bullying and cyber-bullying are important, the current language of the non-germane amendment of HB 131 positions suspension and expulsion as the primary tools of response. This risks overshadowing the preventive, educational, supportive, and restorative strategies that research shows yield stronger, longer-term results in reducing bullying, promoting student well-being, and supporting safe, orderly school environments.

### **Why MTSS-B Matters**

The Multi-Tiered System of Supports for Behavior (MTSS-B) provides a data-driven, tiered framework that promotes prevention, accountability, and safety:

- **Prevention:** Establishes consistent school-wide expectations and positive behavioral supports that reduce bullying before it occurs.
- **Tiered Support:** Matches interventions to student need from universal expectations for all to targeted and intensive supports for those with greater challenges.
- **Educational and Restorative Responses:** Focuses on repairing harm, teaching appropriate behavior, and reintegrating students into the learning community.
- **Safety and threat-assessment alignment.** School safety is a foundational pillar of MTSS-B. When implemented with fidelity, MTSS-B supports coordinated threat-assessment procedures, consistent behavioral expectations, monitoring of behavioral incidents and targeted supports that reduce escalation and enhance safe climates.

### **NH Youth Data and the Need for Prevention**

The 2023 New Hampshire Youth Risk Behavior Survey underscores the importance of prevention and early support:

- **40%** of students reported feeling persistently sad or hopeless.
- **19%** reported being bullied on school property or online.
- **22%** seriously considered suicide in the past year.

These figures highlight that significant numbers of students are at risk of academic disruption, behavioral escalation, and mental-health challenges and that bullying prevention must be integrated into the broader behavioral, academic and safety systems of our schools.

### **Concerns with HB 131 Non-germane Amendment**

- Overemphasis on exclusionary discipline may shift focus away from education, prevention, and re-teaching expectations.
- Schools need flexibility to implement comprehensive behavioral frameworks like MTSS-B, which have demonstrated success in reducing bullying and improving climate.
- Effective bullying prevention integrates discipline within a broader educational system of supports, not as the primary response.
- Focusing heavily on exclusion may unintentionally reduce opportunities for educational interventions and reintegration of students, thereby limiting the impact on long-term behavior change and safe school culture.

## Recommendations

1. Recognize MTSS-B as the foundation for bullying prevention and behavioral health in schools.
2. Promote restorative and educational interventions that reinforce accountability through learning and re-engagement.
3. Align policy with data-driven safety systems, including behavioral-threat assessment and progress monitoring.
4. Provide professional development and technical assistance to strengthen implementation and fidelity.

## In Closing

School safety, behavioral health, and academic achievement are interconnected. By supporting MTSS-B, New Hampshire can strengthen prevention, improve outcomes, and ensure that disciplinary measures are balanced with education and support. We urge the Committee to consider amendments to HB 131 that reinforce these priorities and preserve local flexibility to meet student and community needs.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued leadership in supporting safe, effective schools across New Hampshire.

Sincerely,

Amy Gregoire

Director of the Office of School Wellness

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Multi Tiered System Coordinator

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