

County Council of Howard County, Maryland

2012 Legislative Session

Legislative day # 14

RESOLUTION NO. 169 - 2012

Introduced by: Courtney Watson

A RESOLUTION to encourage the General Assembly to provide the necessary resources to appropriate agencies to implement the use of multidisciplinary teams to address bullying, harassment, and intimidation among students.

Introduced and read first time on _____, 2012.

By order _____
Stephen LeGendre, Administrator to the County Council

Read for a second time and a public hearing held on _____, 2012.

By order _____
Stephen LeGendre, Administrator to the County Council

This Resolution was read the third time and was ___Adopted___ Adopted with amendments,___ Failed___ Withdrawnby the County Council on _____,2012.

Certified by _____
Stephen LeGendre, Administrator to the County Council

NOTE: [[text in brackets]] indicates deletions from existing language; TEXT IN SMALL CAPITALS indicates additions to existing language. ~~Strike-out~~ indicates material deleted by amendment; Underlining indicates material added by amendment.

1 **WHEREAS**, Addressing the problem of bullying, harassment, and intimidation must be
2 a shared responsibility among all of the agencies throughout the community that work with
3 young people;

4
5 **WHEREAS**, The Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005 mandates that the Maryland State
6 Department of Education require county boards of education to report incidents of bullying,
7 harassment, and intimidation against students attending a public school;

8
9 **WHEREAS**, Howard County has not been immune to tragedies suffered by families in
10 which cyber bullying has been a contributing factor;

11
12 **WHEREAS**, According to the Maryland State Department of Education, a total of 4,678
13 incidents of bullying, harassment, and intimidation in schools were reported for the 2010-2011
14 school year representing a state-wide increase of 860 reported incidents from the 2009-2010
15 school year and a state-wide increase of 2,992 reported incidents from the 2008-2009 school
16 year;

17
18 **WHEREAS**, The Maryland State Department of Education indicates that the extent of
19 bullying, harassment, and intimidation in Maryland public schools may likely be underreported;

20
21 **WHEREAS**, although school systems, including Howard County Public School System,
22 have addressed continuously the problems of bullying, harassment, and intimidation through the
23 requirements of the federal Safe Schools Act and by providing preventative measures, student
24 education, and professional development, these problems cannot be addressed successfully by
25 school systems alone;

26
27 **WHEREAS**, The Howard County Public School System reported 300 incidents of
28 bullying, harassment, and intimidation for the 2010-2011 school year – three times the number of
29 incidents reported for the 2008-2009 school year;

1
2 **WHEREAS**, According to the Maryland State Department of Education, victims of
3 bullying, harassment, and intimidation and offenders both show higher rates of school
4 absenteeism;

5
6 **WHEREAS**, *The Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2010 Report*, produced by the
7 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), in the
8 U.S. Department of Education, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), in the U.S. Department
9 of Justice showed that during the 2007-2008 school year, 25% of the responding public schools
10 reported that bullying was a daily or weekly problem and that bullying and harassment are a
11 problem in Maryland schools.

12
13 **WHEREAS**, The non-profit organization, WiredSafety, reports that 85 to 90 percent of
14 44,000 middle school students surveyed reported that they had been bullied online at least once
15 but only 5 percent said they would tell their parents;

16
17 **WHEREAS**, Anne Townsend, chief academic officer and president of the Baltimore-
18 based Mariposa Child Success Programs, said children and teens don't have the coping skills to
19 put bullying into perspective, but they can learn to do so with the help of parents and teachers;

20
21 **WHEREAS**, In rapidly increasing numbers, students use social media sites like Twitter,
22 Facebook, YouTube, and Tumblr to connect with friends, but some students use these sites, often
23 anonymously, to disparage classmates, sometimes with serious consequences;

24
25 **WHEREAS**, According to the Pew Research Center, 95% of all teens ages 12-17 are
26 now online and 80% of those online teens are users of social media sites and that 88% of social
27 media-using teens have witnessed other people being mean or cruel on social network sites;

28
29 **WHEREAS**, A 2010 report from the Cyberbullying Research Center indicates that

1 cyberbullying and traditional bullying may increase the likelihood of suicide or suicidal
2 thoughts;

3

4 **WHEREAS**, Schools, parents, and students are struggling to address and contain the
5 growing cyberbullying problem, which may happen during the school day on student-owned
6 devices as well as school computers and also off-premises, after-hours, but affecting other
7 students and the school environment;

8

9 **WHEREAS**, The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, in *Kowalski v.*
10 *Berkeley County Schools*, 652 F.3d 565 (2011), affirmed disciplinary action taken against a
11 student responsible for cyber-bullying, finding that the action taken did not violate the First
12 Amendment and the student’s behavior risked interference with school discipline and the
13 educational mission;

14

15 **WHEREAS**, The use of multidisciplinary teams has proven to be an effective method of
16 providing and coordinating services to students in other areas, such as under Section 5-706 of the
17 Family Law article of the Maryland Code;

18

19 **WHEREAS**, Schools lack sufficient resources to address adequately the problem of
20 bullying, harassment, and intimidation, particularly with the proliferation and use of social media
21 by students;

22

23 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the County Council of Howard County,
Maryland, this ____ day of _____, 2012, that the General Assembly is urged to:

24

25 (1) provide the necessary resources to school systems and appropriate agencies who
26 work with young people to allow them to establish multidisciplinary teams in each jurisdiction,
27 to include but not be limited to school personnel, and representatives from the local police
28 department, the appropriate local mental health agency, and the local State’s Attorney, to address
bullying, harassment, and intimidation;

1 (2) promote the use of multidisciplinary teams to handle, investigate, and address
2 reports of bullying, harassment, intimidation, and retaliation, whether in person or on-line, by
3 encouraging school systems to enter into written agreements with the participating agencies in
4 the multidisciplinary teams to specify standard operating procedures for the investigation and
5 resolution of bullying, harassment, and intimidation complaints, including a timeline for
6 investigation and resolution; and

7 (3) ensure that the multidisciplinary teams receive the necessary training on an
8 ongoing basis to help bolster bullying-prevention efforts, to support the students who are
9 victimized, and to provide guidance and remediation to the perpetrators;

10
11 **AND BE IF FURTHER RESOLVED** That the Administrator of the Howard County
12 Council shall mail a copy of this Resolution to the chairperson of each jurisdiction's delegation
13 for distribution to every member of the General Assembly.