



April 8, 2014

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of National PTA's more than four million members, I write to request your co-sponsorship of the Safe Schools Improvement Act (S.403), bipartisan legislation that would help to ensure that all children are able to learn in a safe and positive environment free of bullying and harassment.

As the nation's oldest and largest volunteer child advocacy organization, National PTA has long advocated for the health and wellbeing of all children. PTA believes that the safety of children in school settings is a fundamental right and therefore we advocate for policies and programs that address the prevention, intervention, and elimination of bullying to allow every child full access to educational opportunities.

The Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA) would amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to require K-12 public schools to enact policies to address student-to-student bullying and harassment. Research shows that bullying is a pervasive problem in U.S. schools, as approximately 28 percent of students ages 12-18 report being bullied and 30 percent admit to bullying others.¹ Both bullying other children and being the target of bullies can have lifelong consequences. Students who bully as children often continue abusive behavior into adulthood and in addition to emotional damage, students who experience bullying show decreased academic achievement and are more likely to miss, skip, or drop out of school.²

PTA believes that in order for a bullying prevention policy to be effective it must include the training of educators, parents, and students. We are therefore pleased that the SSIA not only requires the development and implementation of an anti-bullying and harassment policy but also that all students, teachers, and parents be educated annually on the policy. PTA also promotes disciplinary interventions that emphasize the positive behavior of students and we therefore strongly support the SSIA's encouragement of positive and preventative approaches to school discipline.

National PTA thanks you for your consideration of this request and looks forward to working with you to ensure that every child is guaranteed a safe learning environment. We urge you to contact Christina Baumgardner (Christina_baumgardner@casey.senate.gov) in Senator Casey's office to



cosponsor the Safe Schools Improvement Act (S.403). Additionally, if we can be of assistance please contact Jessica Seitz, Education Policy Analyst, at jseitz@pta.org or (703) 518-1249.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Otha E. Thornton Jr.".

Otha E. Thornton, Jr.
President
National PTA

¹ Stopbullying.gov. (2013). Facts About Bullying. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services. Available online at: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/news/media/facts/>

² Stopbullying.gov. (2013). Effects of Bullying. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services. Available online at: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/effects/index.html>