

**Remarks – Representative James R. Roebuck
House Education Committee Public Hearing
October 10, 2012**

**HB2464 and Anti-Bullying Efforts to be Part of School-Wide Positive
Behavior Interventions and Support Efforts in Schools**

While I am supportive of efforts like those of Rep Quigley in HB2464 to prohibit harassment, intimidation, bullying and cyber bullying of our children in our schools, I believe that these specific efforts should be part of an overall effort to create a safer and more positive school culture for students and staff. Without a positive school culture it will be difficult to eliminate bullying in all its manifestations and ensure safety for all our students. What schools really need is a School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) strategy.

School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) is a research-based, evidence-based, cost-effective, systems approach for establishing the social culture needed for schools to be effective learning environments for all students. SWPBIS eliminates barriers to learning, creates and maintains a safe and effective learning environment in schools, and ensures that all students have the social and emotional skills needed to succeed in school and beyond. SWPBIS helps schools teach students expected behaviors and social skills, creates student behavioral health and academic support systems, and applies data-based decision-making to discipline, academics, and social/emotional learning.

The goal of SWPBIS is to establish a predictable, consistent, and positive school culture for all students and staff. SWPBIS schools focus on prevention, intercede to correct individual student behavioral "miscues," and consistently and frequently reward students who do the right thing. Family and student engagement is essential to SWPBIS schools' success. SWPBIS helps all students and provides increasing levels of academic and behavioral supports and services to the children most in need.

The presence of bullying behavior in schools can seriously affect the overall school climate and the success and mental health of all students and faculty. Researchers and practitioners alike recognize that simple solutions, such as stand-

alone curriculums or targeting only a subset of students for interventions are not effective. Schools need systemic approaches that noticeably change aspects of the school culture, while also teaching ALL students the skills to meet their social needs without bullying. Multiple levels of intervention and ongoing use of data to guide actions are also identified as critical for impacting issues of school violence such as bullying. Research studies have shown that implementing School Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) with fidelity is associated with reductions in problem behavior including aggression, fighting, and harassment; significant increases in the perception of school safety; and the promotion of pro-social behaviors are also noted. Thus schools currently implementing SWPBIS with fidelity are likely to experience a decrease in behaviors associated with bullying as an effect of their school-wide PBIS efforts. At the same time, the severity of this problem, and the heightened local and national attention toward this issue, reinforces the need to be explicit in how bullying prevention can be embedded in SWPBIS, and how it can be specifically targeted towards the identified needs of individual schools.

Implementation of SWPBIS in Pennsylvania is under the leadership of a diverse set of stakeholders including PA Department of Education (PDE), Bureau of Special Education (BSE), Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN), Pennsylvania Governor's Commission on Children and Families, private providers, Pennsylvania Departments of Health and Public Welfare, advocacy groups, and higher education. The stated goals of the program are:

- Develop and implement a school-wide cross-system approach for supporting the academic and emotional well-being of all students using research-based positive behavioral supports and strategies of varying intensity: 1) universal or preventative strategies for the benefit of all students; 2) secondary strategies for those who will achieve with enhanced supports; and 3) tertiary or intensive services for those who will achieve with intensive and coordinated supports.
- Achieve sustainability by seeking funding and legislative support for demonstration models, providing training and technical assistance, and encouraging the facilitation of collaborative partnerships among schools, families, youth and agencies.
- Foster a consistent application of best practice standards among schools, families and agencies.

- Promote shared values that are consistently demonstrated through practice and partnerships of schools, agencies and families.
- Develop and embed opportunities for collaboration between systems partners and families.
- Establish a dialogue that will inform ongoing training needs.
- Reduce fragmentation of training resources.
- Conduct cross-systems professional development to ensure a common language, knowledge base, and understanding of supports and services available to children, youth and families.
- Develop a cross-systems/integrated planning process for individual child/family needs.
- Develop a cross-systems progress monitoring/data collection system to ensure accountability to the academic achievement and well-being of all children, youth and families.
- Ensure that youth and families will have opportunities for meaningful participation in all PAPBS Network activities, including the development, provision and monitoring of services, policies and procedures.

As of March 1, 2012 there were a total of 99 Districts, 1 Charter School, 1 IU school, 293 School buildings (Elementary - 184; Middle -65; High Schools-44) who have implemented the school wide positive behavior intervention and supports program.

The latest program evaluation completed in 2010-2011 of the 199 schools across Pennsylvania that have been trained to implement School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) has shown much progress and success once the program has been fully implemented with fidelity. An increasing number of schools in Pennsylvania are implementing bullying prevention programs; some of these same schools are also implementing Positive Behavior Support Programs. Bullying prevention and Positive Behavior support programs are natural allies.

The anti-bullying measures in HB2464 need to be incorporated into the overall school efforts embodied in school-wide positive behavior support efforts. Our state needs to invest in these efforts along with anti-bullying efforts to ensure safety and a positive learning environment in all of our public schools.