

As we continue to harness our resources and push for comprehensive legislation, our website will be highlighting weekly the multitude of bills that Congress has been working on to critically address anti-bullying measures.

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Our first highlight is Representative Jared Polis' H.R. 998, the Student Non-Discrimination Act of 2011, also introduced as S.555 by Senator Al Franken in the Senate.

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H.R. 998 - Student Non-Discrimination Act of 2011 (Rep. Jared Polis, D-CO)

Representative Polis' H.R. 998, the Student Non-Discrimination Act of 2011, would establish a federal prohibition against discrimination and harassment in public schools based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Schools would be required to take proactive steps and provide meaningful remedies (loss of federal funding and a legal cause of action) to prevent discrimination and harassment as well as address discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity that occurs in public schools, modeled on Title IX. SNDA's focus on discrimination is directed at acts of discrimination by the school and its staff (this can include incidents of student on student bullying and harassment when such behaviors rise to the level of discrimination, such as when schools fail to act on student-on-student behavior). Our steady and continued progress on this issue is furthered by the Administration's strong supports of the goals of the Student Non-Discrimination Act. H.R. 998 currently has 158 cosponsors (157 Democrats and 1 Republican, Ros-Lehtinen), and S. 555 currently has 40 cosponsors.

Our second highlight is Representative Linda Sanchez's Safe Schools Improvement Act of 2011, also introduced as S.506 by Senator Bob Casey in the Senate.

H.R. 1648/S. 506 – Safe Schools Improvement Act of 2011 (Representative Linda Sanchez, D-CA and Senator Bob Casey, D-PA)

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This legislation would require action on bullying on a local, state, and federal level. LEAs would be required to include prohibitions on bullying in their discipline policies, monitor measures of performance on bullying, and establish grievance procedures for students, parents, and educators. LEAs would also be required to notify parents, students, and educators of their bullying prohibition policies, grievance procedures, and numerical assessments of bullying behavior in their schools. States would be required to collect information on bullying in schools and communities, conduct a needs assessment for bullying prevention programs, and provide technical assistance to LEAs in bullying prevention. At a federal level, the Secretary of Education would be required to issue a biennial evaluation of bullying prevention programs, and the Commissioner for Education Statistics would collect data to determine the incidence and prevalence of bullying in schools. H.R. 1648 currently has 161 cosponsors (155 Democrats and 6 Republicans), and S. 506 currently has 41 cosponsors (40 Democrats and 1 Republican, Kirk).