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### **House of Representatives Passes Anti-Bullying Bill**

BOSTON – State Representative Kate Hogan joined her colleagues in the Massachusetts House of Representatives in passing legislation that would prohibit bullying and cyber-bullying while requiring schools to develop a bullying prevention plan and integrate bullying prevention instruction into their curriculum.

“This bill aims to secure our students from bullying both during the school day and after school hours,” House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo said. “In light of recent tragedies, the House has taken the appropriate steps to protect our students from the terror of bullying and cyber-bullying.”

“Our schools need to be free from bullying in all forms – whether it comes on school grounds, away from school, or over cyberspace,” House Committee on Ways and Means Chairman Charles A. Murphy said. “With our actions today, we’re putting school officials, teachers, parents, and students on notice that bullying will not be allowed to interfere with a child’s ability to get an education.”

“I have received many calls and emails in support of this bill,” said Rep. Hogan. “Today my YES vote was a NO to bullying in our schools. Today we passed a bill that offers the children of our Commonwealth a life that includes freedom from fear of their fellow students.”

The bill prohibits bullying at school – including at school-sponsored events, on school busses and at school bus stops – as well as the use of electronic devices to carry out cyber-bullying. The bill also bans bullying or cyber-bullying that takes place outside of school if the bullying affects the school environment.

The bill directs the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to set regulations requiring school teachers and staffers to report incidents of bullying. The legislation also dictates that a school must promptly investigate reports of bullying and notify local law enforcement if the bullying would result in criminal charges.

In an effort to protect against incidents of bullying across the Commonwealth, the bill requires schools to add bullying prevention instruction to their curriculum and offer information about bullying prevention to parents. It also well provides for the training of teachers and staff in the identification, prevention, and response to bullying among students.

The legislation would apply to public schools, charter schools and schools providing special education services to students for school districts. It also requires each of these entities to develop a bullying prevention and intervention plan. Such plans must include methods for responding to bullying, guidelines for giving notice to parents of those involved in bullying and appropriate services for students who have been bullied or acted as a bully.

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