



FACT SHEET Foster Youth School Safety Education (AB 3015)

Questions: email@eqca.org

This bill would require that existing training programs for foster youth, foster youth group homes, child welfare personnel, foster parents, and relative caregivers, include information on existing school safety laws that protect students from bias-motivated harassment and discrimination.

Status: Introduced February 22, 2008

Author: Assemblymember Julia Brownley

Co-sponsors: Equality California, the National Association of Social Workers – California Chapter, and Gay Straight Alliance Network

BACKGROUND

On February 12, 2008 a 14 year-old boy entered a classroom at E.O. Green Junior High School in Oxnard, California and shot a 15 year-old student named Lawrence “Larry” King in the head. Two days later, Larry was taken off life support. Larry self-identified as gay, sometimes wore make-up and feminine jewelry, and was the target of ridicule and bullying by some of his classmates, including the shooter. Larry was a foster youth who lived in a group home for abused and neglected children.

Every day young people are subjected to bullying or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity and expression. Foster youth are more vulnerable to harassment by virtue of their familial status and oftentimes, their caregivers are not aware of the existence of education nondiscrimination laws that protect students from such harassment at school. Efforts should be made to ensure that foster youth and their caregivers are knowledgeable about how to prevent and report harassment and violence not only in their homes, but in their schools as well.

EXISTING LAW

Existing California law provides that foster youth have specified rights and protections, including the right not to be subjected to discrimination or harassment on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Additionally, foster youth group homes, child welfare personnel, foster parents, and relative caregivers are required to undergo training with regards to foster youth rights and protections as a part of their certification.

California also has laws protecting students from harassment and discrimination based on many factors, including sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in schools. The California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act (AB 537) was enacted in 2000, and further strengthened through the passage of AB 394, the Safe Place to Learn Act, and SB 777, the Student Civil Rights Act, which went into effect on January 1, 2008.

WHAT THIS BILL WOULD DO

AB 3015 would require that existing training programs for foster youth, foster youth group homes, child welfare personnel, foster parents, and relative caregivers, include information about the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act, the Safe Place to Learn Act, and the Student Civil Rights Act. Ensuring that foster youth and their caregivers understand existing laws that protect students from bias-motivated discrimination and harassment will help to reduce the incidence of violence directed toward foster youth in their school setting.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Alice Kessler, Equality California – (916) 554-7681 or alice@eqca.org

Wendy Hill, National Association of Social Workers – California Chapter – (916) 442-4565 or whill@naswca.org

Carolyn Laub, Gay Straight Alliance Network – (415) 552-4229 or carolyn@gsanetwork.org

Stephanie Burri, Office of Assemblymember Julia Brownley – (916) 319-2041 or Stephanie.Burri@asm.ca.gov