



STATE OF MINNESOTA

Office of Governor Tim Pawlenty

130 State Capitol ♦ 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard ♦ Saint Paul, MN 55155

May 23, 2009

The Honorable James Metzen
President of the Senate
322 State Capitol Building
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear President Metzen:

Please be advised that I have vetoed and am returning Chapter 164, Senate File 971, a bill that duplicates current law relating to school board policies prohibiting bullying, intimidation, violence, and pattern of harassment in schools.

Bullying is a serious issue that must be vigilantly monitored, prevented, and addressed by school administration and staff. Students should be able to attend school without fear of being bullied, intimidated, harassed, or subject to violence. A failure by school administration and staff to vigorously and forcefully respond to these behaviors is unacceptable.

I agree with the goal of the bill. However, that goal is already addressed by existing Minnesota laws. Minnesota Statutes §121A.0695 requires school districts to adopt written policies prohibiting bullying of any student in any form. In addition, Minnesota Statutes §121A.03 requires school districts to adopt a written policy prohibiting sexual, religious and racial harassment. That law also requires the policy to conform with the Minnesota Human Rights Act and requires school districts to post the policy and discuss it with students and employees.

The proposed legislation is duplicative of current law which directly and clearly prohibits bullying of any type against any student for any reason.

Nevertheless, to ensure schools remain safe for learning, I have instructed the Commissioner of Education to review the model policy required by Minnesota Statutes §121A.03 and to contact school districts to ensure they are meeting the requirements of

Metzen/SF 971

Page 2

May 23, 2009

Minnesota law relating to intimidation and bullying. In addition, the commissioner will encourage school districts to revisit the enforcement of these policies to protect students from bullying, intimidation, harassment, and violence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Pawlenty', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Tim Pawlenty
Governor

cc: Representative Margaret Anderson Kelliher, Speaker of the House
Senator Lawrence J. Pogemiller, Majority Leader
Senator David Senjem, Minority Leader
Senator Scott Dibble
Representative Marty Seifert, Minority Leader
Representative Jim Davnie
Mr. Peter S. Wattson, Secretary of the Senate
Mr. Al Mathiowetz, Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives
Mr. Mark Ritchie, Secretary of State
Commissioner Alice Seagren, Department of Education