

## **Concerned Montana Citizens Against Cyber Bullying**

I represent concerned Montana citizens who oppose the involvement of using information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group that is intended to harm others. We support the idea of a cyber bullying class that must be required in junior high.

Bullying is nothing new to school or youth culture. The past several decades in the United States have seen a remarkably consistent pattern, with bullying beginning in the elementary school years, peaking in frequency and intensity during junior high school (grades six through eight) and leveling off (but continuing) through high school. But the rise of the Internet as a mean of regular communication between our children has opened up new doors for those who wish to bully other children. Chat rooms, MySpace, Facebook, email, instant messaging and other online tools have all helped create the cyber bullying epidemic. According to the National Crime Prevention Center, over 40% of all teenagers with Internet access have reported being bullied online during the past year. This number is continually growing and if not approached quickly could reach to over 50%! Out of these 40% of teens bullied only 10% of them told their parents. Without the parents being fully aware of the situation they are unable to do anything about it. Requiring a class would not only teach the students about this tragedy, but also notify the parents of the situation. Currently, the most common virtual locations for cyber bullying are:

- Chat rooms
- Social networking
- Email
- Instant message systems

As of right now bullying may not be taken as serious as it needs to be. There have been cases of cyber bullying that have led young adults to take their own lives. How far will it get before we do something about this? As the facts above state, cyber bullying is reoccurring and will continue to grow. It is very apparent that something needs to be done about this situation and a required class would be the right first step. Catching kids in their formative junior high years would be the perfect time to teach them of the dangers. Those two or three years will be the first time students statistically experience this harassment and if taught at the right time we could help avoid potential life or death situations.

I will support legislation that offers an education system for bullying.

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